



Walking and Praying Toward Unity

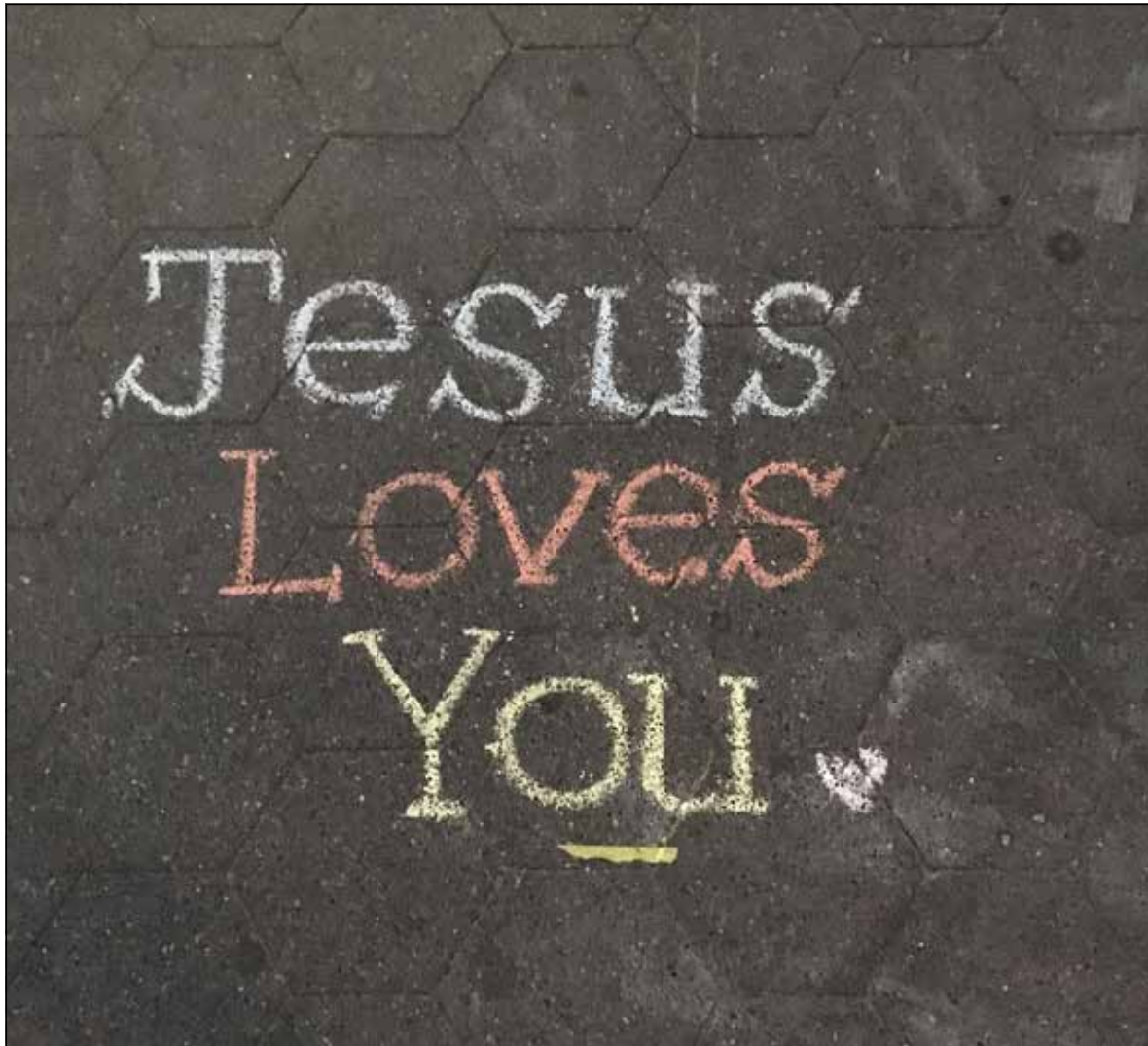
By the Rev. Amanda Currie, Moderator of the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada



This summer I walked about 930 km while praying for The Presbyterian Church in Canada and for our ecumenical partners in the Canadian Council of Churches (1 km for each ministry). Over a hundred Presbyterians across the country walked and prayed with me, and we grew in love for the church and for each other as we shared a pilgrimage of prayer. When I came up with the idea of walking and praying all summer, I didn't really have Christian unity in mind as the goal, but along the way I experienced a sense of growing communion across the church.

Ecumenism is a ministry that has as its goal the reconciliation and unity that Jesus desires for the Christian church. But it turns out that there isn't just one way of getting to that unity, and so the ministry of ecumenism has become multifaceted with a variety of ways of engaging in this work. You may be familiar with the classic division between "faith and order" ecumenism and "life and work" ecumenism as is evident in the ministry of the World Council of Churches, for example.

The first involves theological dialogue about aspects of faith, doctrine, polity and related topics; while the second focuses on what the whole church can do together



in service to the poor, justice and peace, stewardship and other Christian work. In some cases, when progress on questions of faith and order has been difficult, church leaders have put the emphasis on life and work ecumenism, trusting

that our unity will grow when we work together in care and concern for the world.

However, ecumenism is more complex than those two categories. The Prairie Centre for Ecumenism, where I served as a Presbyterian

board member for many years, understood its purpose "to call the churches to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and

to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe." The Centre then identified several tasks as its mission, encompassing various aspects of the ecumenical endeavour: dialogue and common study; ecumenical education and formation; common mission; common witness; and prayer, preaching and worship.

Although each aspect of ecumenical work is important, common prayer has always been my favourite. Perhaps that's because my primary vocation is to be a pastor rather than a theologian. But I think another reason is that common prayer, or what is also called "spiritual ecumenism," is the foundation for theological dialogue. Spiritual ecumenism needs to begin from a place of respect and care for the other and an openness to engage with them in prayer. There is a certain amount of vulnerability in praying together. But spiritual ecumenism can take place before we have all our theological differences worked out.

In a study on "The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue," the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches suggests that prayer is considered "the basis and support" for dialogue. It observes that, "Our common commitment to Christian unity requires not only prayers for one another but a life of common prayer,"¹ so that Christians not only should be praying for each other, but also with each other.

Sometimes, spiritual ecumenism includes experiencing each other's liturgies and diverse worship and prayer forms, as we welcome one another in love. Other times, it includes the use of ecumenical prayer forms that do not belong to one particular Christian tradition, for example using the resources prepared jointly every year by the World Council of Churches and the Vatican for the Week of Prayer for Christian

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Unity.² Whatever prayer forms are used, spiritual ecumenism always involves praying for the reconciliation and unity of the church.

As the report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches observed:

“Common prayer in ecumenical settings makes it possible for Christians from divided ecclesial traditions to praise God together and offer prayer for Christian unity. Prayer lies at the centre of our identity as Christians... The very fact that we are able to pray together... is a sign of the progress that has been made. Yet our common prayer is also a sign

of those things that are still to be achieved. Many of our divisions become apparent precisely in our common prayer.”³

The report concluded:

“Our divisions will not be resolved solely with theological dialogue and common service to the world. We must also pray together if we are to stay together, for common prayer is at the very heart of our Christian life, both in our own communities and as we work together for Christian unity.”⁴

So, we prayed together this summer. I invited prayer requests from our ecumenical partners in the Canadian Council of Churches, so Presbyterians across Canada prayed for the other churches and for the growing unity of the whole church. But mostly we prayed for each other as Presbyterians across Canada. With all the differences, diversities and even disagreements within our denomination, we prayed for the well-being, faithfulness and fruitfulness of all our congregations, ministries and missions. We prayed for friends and for strangers. We prayed for congregations just like ours, and for others that are quite different. We prayed for like-minded people and for those with whom we cannot see eye to eye.

A diverse group of Presbyterians gathered four times by video conference to share experiences and to pray for the church and for each other.

Many also shared photos, reflections, encouragement and prayers every day in our Facebook group. We prayed together and we walked together, having each made some kind of commitment to walking and praying throughout the summer.

I can't report that we made any new theological agreements or that our church will hold together in unity because a number of us decided to walk and pray together this summer. But I can say that as I prayed with other Presbyterians for each of our ministries, I got to know the church a little better, I had the opportunity to connect and share with many faithful ministers, members and people of prayer, and my heart was stretched a little wider to love the whole church a little more.

John Calvin offered a prayer, saying, “Save us, Lord, from being self-centred in our prayers; teach us to remember to pray for others. May we be so caught up in love for those for whom we pray, that we may feel their needs as keenly as our own, and pray for them with imagination, sensitivity, and knowledge.”⁵

Thank you to everyone who walked and prayed with me this summer. May we continue to pray for each other and with each other across The Presbyterian Church in Canada and with our ecumenical partners too, and may God make us one.

Walking, Talking and Praying

Throughout the summer months, the Rev. Amanda Currie, Moderator of the General Assembly, launched an initiative to pray for the various congregations and ministries of the PCC, as well as our ecumenical partners through the Canadian Council of Churches. The moderator walked one kilometre for each—which added up to about 10–11 kms a day—following a prayer schedule that included specific and personalized prayer requests. She also invited participation from others across the church as a joint denomination-wide walking effort, holding up the church through prayer.

As well, the moderator also engaged a variety of ministries in conversation by video conference. The interviews featured the Rev. Jennifer Cameron of St. Columba Presbyterian Church in Belleville, Ont., and the Rev. Paulette Brown of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Humber Heights, Toronto, Ont.

FOOTNOTES

¹ *The Nature and Purpose of Ecumenical Dialogue*. (2005) Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Eighth Report. WCC Publications, Geneva, p. 80, Par. 42.

² The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021 was prepared by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp. The theme “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit” is based on John 15:1–17 and expresses Grandchamp Community's vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the church and the human family. Resources are available at: oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/xi-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity/worship-and-background-material-for-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2021

³ Final report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. (14 February 2006) Appendix A, “A framework for Common Prayer at WCC Gatherings,” par. 1. Accessed online: oikoumene.org/en/folder/documents-pdf/pb-03-specialcommission.pdf

⁴ Ibid., Conclusion, Par. 43.

⁵ Dorothy Stewart, compiler. (2002) *The Westminster Collection of Christian Prayers*. WJK, Louisville, KY, p. 314.



Participants in the Walk and Pray with the Moderator initiative.



A great blue heron taking flight. PHOTO CREDIT: FIONA VAN WISEN.

Walking and Praying... Alone and Together

By Fiona van Wissen, participant in the Walk and Pray with the Moderator initiative and former volunteer with the Iona Community in Scotland

Walking and praying go so well together, especially during a time of such uncertainty in a global pandemic. Writing and photography have been my other lifelines during this time of isolation and new connections.

In late May, the Rev. Amanda Currie shared her invitation to walk and pray across the country. Together, we formed a community, sharing our thoughts at monthly online meetings and our photos and stories through Facebook.

It has been quite a journey from the West Coast... it only seems like yesterday when we were praying for churches in Vancouver on June 1 and I played a video I found from Galilee Korean Presbyterian Church of their 2019 mission trip to Nicaragua.

I had to very quickly get out my atlas to locate some of the towns on the prayer list. As I write this at the start of another heat wave in July, I

can't believe we have already made it to Ontario! Orillia is one of the communities on our prayer list today.

I have been swimming in a lake after many of my sunrise walks. This morning at sunrise on the shore of Lake Ontario, about halfway between Hamilton and Toronto, I walked off the usual path. My heel was sore so I headed off on the grass along a small creek. I looked over and there on the other side of the creek was a great blue heron. I was quite surprised to see it there. I have watched a heron on the shore a few times, but never in the middle of a park!

The heron seemed to be going in the same direction. I slowed my pace, trying not to scare it off. Then I matched my steps to the heron's. Left foot, right foot, I synchronized my legs as best I could. We walked along on opposite sides of the creek for a couple of minutes, fully in the moment. That moment where prayer has no words, but presence.

Eventually someone else came along, the heron took flight, and I continued my walk. Alone, but not alone.



Walk and Pray

Footsteps on a beach
Footsteps on a road
Footsteps on the sidewalk
Footsteps on the trail
Echoes in our heart

Prayers on a beach
Prayers on a road
Prayers on the sidewalk
Prayers on the trail
Prayers in song and silence
Prayers from West to East
From coast to coast to coast

Feet and hearts
Joined in prayer
Songs carried on the wind

Soles stepping lightly—
Souls open to new ways
Of walking in the light
And in the dark

Sunset, sunrise,
Ocean, lake, river
Mountain, valley, forest, or field,
City or country,
We walk together.

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Worship and Work Must Be One

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

Contrary to the expectations of many, a crisis like the one presented by the COVID-19 pandemic did not result in nightmarish societal breakdown marked by violence, self-interest and chaos against a hellscape resembling scenes imagined by Hieronymus Bosch. Rather, we experienced a remarkable amount of calm, mutual concern, generosity and creativity. In place of social unrest and vigilantism, we made masks, banged pots and pans to express thanks to essential workers, hung rainbows in our windows as a sign of hope and baked sourdough bread. What eventually drove people to the streets was not a new set of social dis-ease, but an acknowledgement of the pre-existing cracks, flaws and systemic failures that were always present and becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. Racism, brutality in the home and on the streets, corrupt leadership, climate violence and the unjust distribution of resources have come into higher relief in the crucible of the last few months.

Someone said recently that since March their prayers have become more specific, urgent and filled with as much anger at the state of things as gratitude. They went on to say that those things that sometimes sound so trite—like justice, love and peace—have never felt more relevant and crucial. Their prayer mantra has become, “Your kingdom come.”

We pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven” each week corporately and every day individually. The frequent repetition of the words may dull us to the prayer’s threats and earth-shattering implications. The prayer is a clear acknowledgement of the danger and tragedy present in the world. Equally, it is a confession that our neighbourhoods, churches, schools, workplaces, relationships, homes and hearts are not as they should be and are all in deep need of reform and renovation. The prayer is not a petition for some far-off future utopia, but a cry of resistance against the status quo. To pray that God’s reign be extended and established in the world is asking that the breadth and depth of God’s love permeate our present circumstances as well as our institutions and systems. It is a plea that the world reflect not only God’s glory and beauty, but also God’s principles and politics in the here and now.

To pray the Lord’s Prayer is to ask that our lives change and that we become different than we are. John Calvin wrote, “that the commencement of the reign of God in us is the destruction of the old man (sic)” so that we may be “renewed to another life.” The same is true of this world: the reign of God begins with the destruction of the systems and patterns of things as they are in order to be receptive to better ways that more and more reflect God’s dream for the world. Again, Calvin writes (in the exclusive language of his time) his commentary on the prayer that “the substance of [the Lord’s]



prayer is, that God would enlighten the world by the light of his Word, and would form the hearts of men, by the influences of his Spirit, to obey his justice, and would restore to order, by the gracious exercise of his power, all the disorder that exists in the world.”

At the request of congregations, presbyteries and committees, the denomination advocates for justice, and works for the correction of the disorder in the world. Recently, groups and members of the church have asked for more support as they engage in justice and advocacy. Documents created by the International Affairs Committee of the General Assembly can be found at presbyterian.ca/gao/iac. The work done by the church through Presbyterian World Service & Development can be researched at WeRespond.ca. The denominational staff have also begun reorganizing and gathering materials in new ways to help support congregations and individuals who want to call for change in the world. A collection of the decisions and statements by General Assemblies and resources on matters of social concern have been collected into a chain of web pages at presbyterian.ca/witness-in-the-world. Additionally, an archive of letters written to politicians on contemporary topics can be found at presbyterian.ca/statementsandletters.

All these resources can all be

used for educational purposes or to create templates for people who wish to exercise their discipline of serving God faithfully in the world as well as in their prayers.

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Moderator of the General Assembly:

The Rev. Amanda Currie



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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.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Heroes and Pedestals

Re: “When Your Hero Falls Off His Pedestal,” by the Rev. John Congram, Summer 2020 edition

Guilt, repentance and asking “forgiveness” in 2020 for historical wrongdoing by a “hero/heroine” with

a statue knocked off a pedestal is a sad disregard for human history.

The Bible—a sacred, holy text—chronicles the deeds of great human “heroes,” and the bloodshed some caused. These “heroes” paved the way for the world we inhabit today. Will Bibles be burned, too?

Knocking down statues of political figures (once considered heroes) and burning pictures of “heroes” seems to satisfy anger—but it does not/will not erase their contributions to history.

In Canada this year, statues of great historical figures are being defaced and destroyed. One such sta-

ue was of Canada’s first Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald. Macdonald, with his government, united Canada from coast to coast two hundred years ago. Macdonald was “knocked off a pedestal,” but his legacy, good or bad, will always be with us.

—Ida Fedor-Baan



FEATURE

What I Need from White People Right Now

It's Way Past Time to Confront Anti-Black Racism

By Adele Halliday, a lifelong Presbyterian and member of the Session at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Humber Heights, Toronto, Ont. She works at the national office of The United Church of Canada. This article originally appeared in Broadview magazine.

Some of you may know me—as keynote speaker, an anti-racist educator, a writer, a parent, a theologically-trained layperson, or a lifelong Christian. I am all of these things, and more.

But today I write as a Black Canadian.

The events of the past few months have been deeply traumatizing. I have been cycling through three main emotions—intense anger, immense exhaustion and deep pain. These emotions are not new to me—they are part of what it means to live in a Black body with the reality of racial injustice.

Some of you already know that I've been angry and weary. And now, I'm beyond fed up. Some of us have been demanding action for a very long time. The time for subtle changes is over. It's time for a revolution against relentless racial oppression.

Let me also be clear that I am not writing this letter to my Black colleagues. Many among us who are Black are experiencing a collective and vicarious trauma—an emotional shock that does not just go back a few days, but generations. And we have been finding our own ways to cope and act in the midst of a lifetime of oppression. No, this is directed towards those among you who are white—those who have white privilege and who have benefited from systemic racism.

I would first implore you—please stop saying that you are not a racist. Please stop only pointing to the overt and outrageous actions of a few individuals and demonize them, and say

that you are nothing like them, without challenging systems of privilege. Instead, please acknowledge that you have benefited from a system of white supremacy in this country, and then do something to change the system. Some of us began naming white supremacy and calling out racial injustice long before it was popular. Please also be proactive and do your own work to dismantle racial injustice. It's time to be actively anti-racist.

Some among you have asked what you can do, and what I might need from you at this time.

I can't speak for the whole Black community in Canada, or even Black leaders in the church, but I can name what I need.

Some of you have asked how I'm doing. Here, I need you to be **pastoral**. I have been re-traumatized by the video of a modern-day lynching. I am terrified that I will be one of the Black women shot by police in their own homes. I am full of grief for parents who have had to bury their Black children. I am infuriated that the police were weaponized against a peaceful park walker through a dishonest emergency phone call.

I've been reminded yet again that just having Black skin may be my cause of death. I have already had extensive conversations with my four-year-old about racism, and yet I struggle with how much to share with this child, who senses my anger. I am filled with the pain of what my children will experience in life simply because of having Black bodies.

Many among us in the Black community are carrying a range of emotions these days. But we still need to be present to do our work, to parent, or whatever else goes on in our regular daily lives. The everyday reality of anti-Black racism takes a toll on us and our mental health. So, please be pastoral if we are not always emotionally present these days.



Adele Halliday. PHOTO CREDIT: MICHAEL ERDELYI.

Some have wondered what you can do to support me. I need you to be **prophetic**. I need you to acknowledge and name the realities of anti-Black racism and white supremacy in Canada, and stop falsely postulating that we are better than the United States. I don't want your sympathies, your guilt, or your attempts to mollify my emotions. I also don't want you to make this about me, as an individual. Instead, don't be silent. Name that Black Lives Matter! Interrogate the disproportionate inequities faced by Black peoples in Canada and around the world. We are part of a faith tradition where prophets name truths—I need you to do that too.

Maybe you're tired of seeing news

articles about anti-Black racism. I'm tired of living with it. And I don't get to opt out of the reality of racial injustice. To support me, and other people in the Black community, do not opt out of action either.

Some have wondered what role churches play. I need you to please **Pray. Preach. Protest.** (And repeat). I heard a few people say that the only thing we can do about racial injustice is pray. Don't get me wrong, I am a praying person, and deeply believe in the transformative power of prayer. So, while I may get down on my knees and pray to God, I also then need to get up and preach. I need to protest. I need our churches to not only pray on Sundays, but to also offer a prayer through a lifetime commitment to systemic change.

When you protest and preach and pray, please focus on racism. Too often, I've found that conversations about racism by white people quickly devolve into conversations about patriarchy or poverty or other inequities. I am deeply committed to working towards equity in all its forms—it is my life's work and passion. But, sometimes, we need to get specific about racism without adding other forms of discrimination and oppres-

sion that people may feel more comfortable addressing.

And remember that this is long-term work. Please keep doing this work long after the current display of anti-Black racism has faded from the news cycle and our social media feeds.

Some have asked where God is in the midst of this. Of course God is present, and I believe that Jesus would be among those who are rallying and calling for change. Jesus often aligned himself with people on the margins and those experiencing oppression. Plus, in the spring, we celebrated Pentecost, when God's Spirit is poured out to the church. I believe that God's Spirit is moving among the privileged and comfortable and is prompting, disrupting, prodding and urging. I believe that God's Spirit is moving among us who are wounded, and is soothing, comforting and encouraging.

The work of racial justice is ours to do along with God's. I need you to partner with God in actively doing this work. Don't leave it for God only to do.

Please. Do something, for God's sake. For all our sakes.

It's a matter of life and death.

Justice opposes prejudice in every form.
 It rejects discrimination on such grounds as race, sex, age, status or handicap.
 Justice stands with our neighbours in the struggle for dignity and respect
 And demands the exercise of power for good.
 —Living Faith, 8.4.6

Racism and Hate in Canada Study Guide

The PCC has developed a guide and conversation starter to enable churches and groups to have discussions and pursue responses regarding systemic racism and hate.

The Racism and Hate in Canada Study Guide is available as a free download at presbyterian.ca/racism-study.

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FEATURE



Where is the Love?

By the Rev. Simon Park, St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

The following is adapted from the message available on St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., website at timothy-pc.com/where-is-the-love.

Cities are burning south of the border—not only are the physical structures on fire, but also the very fabric that keeps society together. Anger, brutality, retaliation, ruptured trust: these are the things we are seeing.

How do we respond as individuals and as a church? What is our voice

in this situation?

We first reflect on who we are as articulated in our mission statement: we are a *compassionate community that stands in solidarity with those who experience alienation and marginalization in society*. This is how Jesus lived, and so do we. In this context, we stand in solidarity with Black people in the United States and Canada.

Many people focus on the violence stemming from the protests. We in the church agree with Martin Luther King, Jr., when he said that riots are “*socially destructive and self-defeating*.” We stand by the principles of non-violence that he espoused. That was how Jesus lived, and the way that led to his death on the cross.

However, we also stand by something else Martin Luther King, Jr., said:

“It is as necessary for me to be as vigorous in condemning the conditions which cause persons to feel that they must engage in riotous activities as it is for me to condemn riots... In the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard... As long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again.”

We are seeing the effects of justice that has been postponed. It is time

for us to say with prophetic boldness and loving solidarity: Black lives matter.

Those of us who are white walk the streets without worry for our safety due solely to the colour of our skin. We do not fear making it home. We do not fear being looked upon with immediate suspicion. We can breathe freely.

“I can’t breathe.”

That is literally and metaphorically a living reality for many of our Black brothers and sisters. In Canada, we have hidden for too long beneath the veneer of equal treatment for all, and of Canada being a nice place that is equally nice to all. The myth is being exposed. Only when we see and confront Canadian racism for what it is can we then begin to effectively bring about justice, healing and reconciliation.

This is a time for the rest of us to look honestly at ourselves. *What conscious or unconscious biases do we have toward Black people? How have they affected our attitudes and behaviours toward them? How are we talking about this issue in our families? Have we been complicit in the system that discriminates against and oppresses Black people? Have we purposely buried our heads in the sand to remain oblivious to the experiences they face, day in*

and day out? What is our calling for this time and place?

Let us prayerfully reflect on these questions. There is a time for measured reflection, and there is a time for prayerful action. This is the time for the latter.

Let us pray. Let us stand in solidarity. Let us be agents of truth, justice, peace and reconciliation.

And let us ask our Father to send us some guidance from above.

May God’s peace and blessings be with you.

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COMMITTEES

Committee to Nominate Standing Committees

The Committee to Nominate Standing Committees presents a slate of proposed names to the General Assembly to serve on the Assembly’s committees, which are: Assembly Council, Church Doctrine, Theological Colleges, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, History, International Affairs, Life and Mission Agency, Maclean Estate, Pension and Benefits Board, Trustee Board.

The Committee calls for nominations from presbyteries, synods and committees/boards to consider. From these nominations, the Committee proposes to elect people to serve on the denomination’s committees based on gifts, skills, perspectives, backgrounds and geographic location, etc., to ensure a broad spectrum of involvement. The Committee appreciates the input from across the church in this nomination process and encourages the church to submit names for consideration. Information concerning the annual nomination process is circulated in late fall. The annual deadline for nominations is February 28.



The Committee meets at least twice a year and consists of nine members of the church, appointed for a three-year non-renewable term. The members are nominated by the eight synods, with one synod, every three years in rotation, nominating two members to make up the full

complement of nine. Each synod alternates between nominating a clergy and non-clergy representative. The convener is named from among the members.

In its deliberations, the Committee carries out its duties with discretion, fairness and balance, seeking

to build up the church, to reflect the ethnic diversity of the denomination and challenge members to service. Among its duties, the Committee will

- communicate to the church the various opportunities for service on committees, and the skills, gifts and time commitment re-

quired for each committee;

- correspond with each standing committee and board in order to call for nominations and seek to ascertain the skills particularly needed over the next term of office;
- correspond with Sessions, presbyteries and synods to call for nominations to the various standing committees;
- ensure that there is a balance between ministers and laity, regional representation, gender, and will strive to include the cultural diversity of our church.

The Committee presents a slate of nominations for the commissioners of General Assembly to consider. Proposed changes can be made by commissioners before the General Assembly votes to confirm the members of standing committees for the coming year. Following the General Assembly, the General Assembly Office will inform the people appointed to standing committees and express appreciation to those members whose term is completed.

LEADERSHIP

Cybersecurity Best Practices for Churches

By Canadian Ministries

You have probably noticed that there is a lot of news about cyberthreats and cyberattacks lately. We hear about these attacks affecting banks, hospitals, stores and government systems. But did you know that congregations are also at risk?

Many congregations mistakenly believe that they are not at risk when, in fact, cyberattacks are a threat to anyone who uses a computer that is connected to the Internet. Organizations and businesses that retain people's personal and sensitive information need to be particularly vigilant against cybercrime.

When you stop to think about it, congregations often hold a great deal of data that is highly vulnerable to cybercrimes, which include Internet and email fraud. Congregations may possess or have access to commonly targeted data, including personally identifiable information from congregation members and staff, donation information (donor records, credit card and banking information), financial records (church banking information) and security data.

Congregations are responsible for maintaining the safety and integrity of the data stored on their computers with the same standard of care and confidentiality applied to paper records. Paper records need to be kept under lock and key and away from prying eyes. The same goes for digital records.

There are a few key things you can do to strengthen your congregation's cybersecurity defences. Cyberthreats are always changing, and therefore require best practices to be updated regularly, but here are some helpful tips to help mitigate the risk.

Raise Awareness

The old saying, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is very true when dealing with the risk of cyberattacks. The first step in prevention should be to make sure that anyone who works with computers or other devices connected to your church's network is aware of the risk. Whether the congregation is small or large, urban or rural, financially stable or struggling, cybercrime is a real threat. Regularly train and provide information on the latest cybersecurity threats, how the threats are likely to present themselves, and what to do when they are identified.

The Session, working with the Board of Managers (or appropriate equivalent), may choose to appoint someone to be a cybersecurity champion for the congregation. The



cybersecurity champion's responsibilities will include keeping up-to-date about new threats, informing all staff and volunteers about the risks, and helping to put necessary preventative measures in place. If there isn't anyone in the congregation who could fulfill this role, consider hiring an IT professional to check the congregation's computer system and train any system users. The costs of doing this training could be shared with another congregation.

Types of Risk

Currently, there are three main types of cyberthreat that are most likely to affect congregations:

Phishing Scams

Sending an email to someone falsely claiming to be a legitimate company or organization in an attempt to scam that person is known as "phishing." It is an attempt to persuade people to disclose personal information, like usernames, passwords or credit card information. Often, the emails contain a link or attachment that, if clicked on, will open the door to hackers to infect your computer with malware.

These emails take many forms, some of which are not easy to identify as scams because they are designed or created to look like emails from reputable companies or they include personal details that the scammer has somehow found online.

Some common phishing scams include emails that claim to be from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) or various banking institutions. Another

common scam is the prepaid gift cards scam. This is usually an email purporting to come from someone you know, such as your boss, co-worker, friend or family member, asking you to purchase gift cards—most commonly from Google Play, Amazon or Walmart—and then instructing you to scratch and send the codes to the fraudster by email.

Malware

Malware is malicious software installed without a user's knowledge, typically when a user clicks on a link in a phishing email or visits an infected website. The malware seeks to invade, damage or disable computer systems or networks. It can also invade other devices that are connected to the Internet (e.g., tablets and mobile devices).

Malicious software functions by stealing, encrypting or deleting data, altering or hijacking computer functions, and/or spying on your computer activity without your knowledge or permission.

It is often used to extract money from the computer user. Sometimes, this happens sneakily in incidents where the malware enables cybercriminals to steal passwords or sensitive information that will allow them to gain access to your financial accounts. Other times, it is not sneaky at all; ransomware will announce itself with a message directly to the computer user that informs them that their data has been stolen and that they must pay a certain amount to get it back.

Technical Vulnerabilities

A software vulnerability is a glitch, flaw or weakness present in the software or operating system. Vulnerabilities in the software that your computer or device is using can allow cybercriminals to access your system.

These can exist in any software, including reputable software. Many software vulnerabilities are only discovered after the software has been used by lots of people. When a vulnerability is discovered, the software developer will often release a correction in the form of an update. If an update is available and you do not install it, you are leaving a hole in your software that cybercriminals can use to access your system.

Mitigating the Risk

What can congregations do to mitigate the risk? Cyberthreats are changing regularly so there is no way to ensure that you are 100% protected, but there are several ways to mitigate the risk of cyberattacks.

Email Best Practices

Do not open any suspicious emails. Instead, delete it. If it is claiming to be from someone you know but still seems suspicious, contact the person or organization to ask if they sent it before opening. As well, never give out banking information, passwords or other personal information over email.

Be suspicious of every link in an email. Don't click on the link in an email unless you were expecting it, even if it is from someone you know.

Instead, directly contact the person, company or organization that the email is purporting to come from and ask if they sent you the email.

Always be wary of emails from financial institutions, Internet service providers and other organizations asking you to provide personal information. If in doubt, call the company directly and ask them to verify the email.

Don't reply directly to a suspicious email that appears to come from someone you know to verify its authenticity, as the "from" email address might be different from the "reply" email address. Instead, you should create a new email using the email address you have for the person.

Password Best Practices

Change your password regularly and create unique passwords that use a combination of words, numbers, symbols, and both upper- and lower-case letters.

Never use the same password for multiple websites. Each of your passwords should be unique.

Never use automatic login features that save your username and password on the websites you are visiting, and always log out of websites and apps when you are done using them.

Consider using a secure password manager. Reputable password managers, such as LastPass, allow you to save your passwords in one place, meaning that you can make long and complicated passwords without worrying that you won't be able to remember them. This software will assist you in choosing strong passwords and then encrypt the passwords and store them online in a safe, cloud-based storage system. Be sure to do your research before choosing a password manager. Read the reviews and pay careful attention to the security features of the software.

Security Software Best Practices

A firewall acts as a barrier between your computer and any threat from outside your system. Ensure that the firewall on your computer is turned on and keep it updated. If you do not have a firewall on your computer, install a reputable one.

Also install reputable anti-virus and anti-spyware software and keep it updated. The software will likely run regular scans on its own; just be sure to check that it is working properly and scanning at regular intervals.

It is also important to install an Ad blocker extension on your web browser. While many ads on web-

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sites are not harmful, there are some websites that use ads to hide malware. Installing an Ad blocker on your browser will block potentially harmful ads from showing up.

Internet Browsing Best Practices

When accessing websites, always look for the “padlock” icon and an https:// (emphasis on the last letter, s) to be sure you have a safe and secure connection during online banking, shopping or while sending personal information.

Adjust your web browser safety settings for optimal security. On most browsers, such as Firefox, Google Chrome, Internet Explorer or Safari, the security menus can be found in the upper right-hand corner of the browser window. If you are unsure as to how to maximize your security settings, search on Google for how to do it (e.g., “how to choose maximum security settings on Firefox”).

Clear your browser cache after banking or shopping online to make sure your personal information isn’t stored on your computer.

While browsing the web, you might suddenly encounter something on a web page that appears to be warning you about a problem with your device. It might even look like the alert is coming from your device. It isn’t. These alerts are pop-ups designed to trick you into calling a phony support number or buying an app that claims to fix the issue. Don’t call the number. Simply navigate away from that page.

Backup Your Computer

Always keep an up-to-date backup of your computer data stored on an external drive so that the data could be restored if the computer was stolen, damaged or it malfunctioned. Once the hard drive has been corrupted by a cyberattack, it is too late to do a backup, so it needs to be done regularly.

The need for regular backups cannot be overemphasized. The hard drive of your computer is a mechanical device that can and may well fail—sometimes at the most inconvenient time—and can result in a loss of software programs and data.

Automate the process if your software has a scheduler so the onus is not on you or others to initiate the backup process, but please make it part of your regular routine. Remember not doing backups is similar to leaving paper records out on the picnic table; it will rain!

The backup media should be stored off-site from the source computer. Practice retrieving data from the backup device so that you know it is working properly.

Consult with an IT Professional

It is good practice for churches to consult with an IT professional once per year to ensure that their computer systems are up-to-date, and they are aware of the latest cybersecurity risks. You may have an IT professional in your congregation who is willing to help as a volunteer. Or there are plenty of paid professionals who are willing to come in to offer advice and maintenance.

When facing a security issue with your computer systems, it is better to play it safe than be sorry, so be sure to seek professional advice when needed.

What if We Experience a Cyberattack?

Because cyberthreats are always changing, it is possible that, despite your best efforts, the computer(s) at your church may be compromised in a cyberattack. If this happens, contact an IT professional as soon as possible. A professional who works with computers regularly and is familiar with cyberthreats may be able to retrieve some of the lost information and restore your computer(s). Be sure to ask them to also put the appropriate measures in place to ensure maximum security in the future.

It’s important to disclose the breach to those affected. Privacy legislation in Canada, which is designed to safeguard the personal data of Canadians, requires that companies



and organizations disclose when a breach has happened to those whose data has been compromised. You can familiarize yourself with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and its requirements at priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/the-personal-information-protection-and-electronic-documents-act-pipeda.

Keeping Financial Information Secure

All paper records of donations should be kept under lock and key and accessible to authorized people only. Databases used to keep track of donors should be secure. Most database software will have security features built into it. Be sure to ask about that when you are acquiring software. The Session should be clear about who has authority to see these records.

If your congregation is receiving gifts by credit card, it is important that this data is kept secured. Online giving forms should be on secure https:// web pages and ensure that your provider is PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards) Compliant. Online donation programs will encrypt the credit card information (number, expiry date, CSV) when it is entered, and the congregation

the encrypted information so it can be used to process another donation at a different time.) It should be clear who can receive donations and enter credit card information, and those authorized should be aware of best practices to ensure donor privacy.

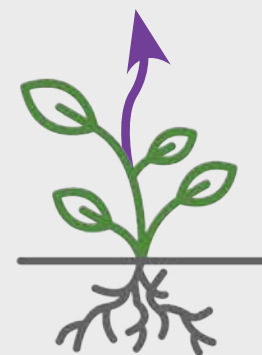
After the Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) contact person transcribes donor bank account information to the PAR confirmation letter, it is wise to file the original application under lock and key or simply destroy (shred) the application documents and void cheque.

Interac e-Transfer donations via email are often the preferred method of digital giving for donors and churches alike. However, many banks prefer that churches receive e-Transfers by automatic deposit only. When an e-Transfer uses “question and answer” based password security, funds can be easily redirected to the wrong bank account, either by mistake or by fraud. Talk to your church’s bank about the best way to secure Interac e-Transfers for your account.

See the full version of this resource online at presbyterian.ca/eq4



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LEADERSHIP

Helping Churches Thrive



By Canadian Ministries

In May 2020, The Presbyterian Church in Canada launched a funding program to help churches in the midst of COVID-19 discover new ways to gather and send God's people. A call was put out to the church, welcoming applications from ministries that wanted to develop discipleship programs to help deepen people's faith during a time of great upheaval or to begin a new public witnessing program as a way to spread the good news in their communities. The applications came rolling in! From coast to coast, ministries put on their creative thinking hats and with the Spirit's guidance, developed wonderful ministries to reach out to their communities in whole new ways. Below is a

quick sampling of the over 30 grants that were given out under this program.

Cooking for the Soul Prairie Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man.

Eating, that most central of human activity, is also a central symbol of God's love and provision. Repeatedly, the Bible refers to food—manna scattered across the desert, a small boy's lunch that miraculously fed 5,000 people, the sacred meal around which we gather as Christians and remember. Recognizing the spiritual significance of food, Prairie Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man., is putting together a spiritual cookbook which will be so much more than just recipes. This collection will also include prayers, reflections and conversation starters to help members of the church and community think deeply about how they are fed and nourished by both food and faith.

Friendly Faces St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

Hearing a friend's voice is great, seeing their face is better, and being able to hug them is best! While the members of St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., cannot do the hugging, they can bring the face to the voice.

The early weeks of COVID-19 were very difficult for the congregation. Along with the challenges associated with the pandemic, they were also dealing with the deaths of a few long-term members and a transition in ministry. When social distancing meant they could no longer gather, they knew they needed to find a way to connect and to pray for one another. The congregation is exploring the possibility of developing a program to

send a "reporter" from the congregation to interview other members. The hope is that these videos will help the community stay up to date with each other's lives and learn about the areas where prayers are needed.

Rule of Life Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

We all have moments of deep soul hunger where we long to overcome the habits that distract us from living a life of faith and that distance us from experiencing the love of God in Jesus Christ. Recognizing this is a challenge, the leaders at Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., began to ask themselves: What is the way to a flourishing life? How can we live in daily communion with God, awake and aware of God's everyday presence? These reflections led Knox to develop an online opportunity for congregation and community members to develop a Rule of Life. Based on the ancient Christian practice developed by St. Benedict in the 6th Century, the Rule of Life program at Knox will help the community develop a repertoire of shared spiritual rhythms, renunciations and relationships as they strive to live life in Jesus together.

Funds from this grant are being used to develop a website and video-based online teaching program that will explain the history and practice of the Rule of Life.

Virtual Camp Camp Geddie in Merigomish, N.S.

For years, Camp Geddie in Merigomish, N.S., has been committed to their mission of inviting all children to experience the joy of God's beauty and love in creation, and to nurture a relationship with Christ in a caring community through play and worship. When it became clear that the pandemic would force them to make the heartbreaking decision to close the camp for the summer, they knew they had to pivot in order to pursue their commitment to this mission. Thus, Virtual Camp Geddie was born! Using a platform designed especially for camps, the staff team has been gathering groups of campers for morning devotions, crafts, vespers and even campfires—all in the virtual world.

Not only has virtual camp allowed Camp Geddie to maintain its ministry, it has also extended their reach. Children from other provinces or without the economic means to go to sleep-away camp are now joining Camp Geddie alumni for a summer of fun!



Taking part in the Camp Geddie virtual talent show.

To learn more about virtual camps taking place across the PCC visit: presbyterian.ca/2020/06/25/virtual-camp.

Equipping Bible Study Programs

The Well Church in Mississauga, Ont.

Inspired by a vision that all members of the church would be able to move anywhere in the world and begin their own Bible study group, the Rev. Stephen Kwon of The Well Church in Mississauga, Ont., launched a new online Bible study with a special twist. The Bible study sought both to nourish members through the Word of God, but also to equip them with the exegetical tools necessary to lead a Bible study wherever they might find themselves. The vision of this program is grounded in the belief that God is constantly raising up new leaders and sending them out into the community. This program aims to make sure whoever God sends is prepared!

Correspondence Bible Study—St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Brandon, Man.

In the early days of COVID-19, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Brandon, Man., quickly realized that not all churches could pursue online options as a way to gather the community during the pandemic. The challenge that this new reality created led the congregation to get very creative with their Bible study. In place of physically gathering the congregation together to study the Word of God, the Rev. Dr. Glenn Ball developed a congregation-wide cor-

respondence Bible study. Congregation members ranging in age from 18 to 92, received weekly packages mailed to their home with scripture passages and reflections. Not only did they receive mail, they were expected to send some back!

Each week's package included a return envelope and response sheet that gathered reflections from the members and were then shared within the congregation. The result—a congregation-wide pen-pal project that strengthened relationships and faith.

Spiritual Biographies— St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kamloops, B.C.

Recognizing the imbalance between being called to be Christ's witnesses in the world and feeling equipped to do so, the Session at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kamloops, B.C., wanted to develop a pathway for congregation members to step into the biblical call to witness. This has led them to launch the Spiritual Biographies project. The project is simple, but the anticipated impact is huge.

Congregation members will be interviewed in short video clips where they are asked to respond to one question: *How has God been present with you through a time of difficulty?* The videos will then be shared on social media and on the congregation's website as a way to celebrate God's faithfulness and to raise awareness of God's presence in the lives of the community. The congregation also prays that these stories will provide hope and offer a glimpse into the blessings that come with living a life of faith.

Presbyterians
Sharing is
equipping
congregations
as they adapt
through
innovative
ministry during
these changing
times.



LEADERSHIP

Why?

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



Since I have entered my 80s, I have learned that what the “old folk” told me when I was young is indeed true. As you get older, time passes faster. In fact, for me it passes faster than the Lone Ranger’s horse, Silver. If you don’t understand that allusion, ask a grandparent or someone born before 1950.

What has haunted me all my life are questions that begin with a little three letter word: “Why?”

Why are there disasters every day, like earthquakes and tornadoes, and pandemics killing innocent people? Why do we need diseases, like cancer, that cause immense suffering? Why do kind, Christian, thinking Americans, just like us, still vote for Donald Trump? If a loving and all-powerful God rules the universe, why does God allow carnage?

I suppose all of my questions can be summarized in the title of Rabbi Harold Kushner’s book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

Of course, many bad things happen in the world that have nothing to do with God, like war, mass shootings, weather changes and rising oceans due to climate change. These we can plainly see are caused by human folly, ignorance, or just plain old sin.

And we know, but seldom admit to

ourselves, that none of us will get out of this world alive. Yet the death of a loved one or dear friend, even after a long and good life, can knock us off our feet.

The other day my beloved brother-in-law died and I found myself at his graveside, because of the pandemic, conducting his funeral. Of course, I said all of the good and hopeful things in our faith. Yet, I couldn’t help wishing I were somewhere else and that we could detour around such experiences. The fact is that many of us never completely get over the big losses in our lives.

Over the years, whenever I moved to a new congregation, I would check the congregation’s burial records. I was looking for parents who had lost a child. To me, both then and now, the loss of a child seemed the greatest tragedy we could be called to face. Knowing it was inevitable that I would be called to help some face such experiences, I was looking for help from

those who had already gone through it.

Over the years, I have heard all kinds of answers to my questions of *why*. None of which I found satisfactory, least of all those offered by well-intentioned Christians.

Some simply say, “It is what it is, just accept this reality.” A few years ago, a young man chose this as the slogan for his new brewery in Tiverton, Ont. I have a hat emblazoned with this slogan. I think I paid 50 cents for it after the brewery went broke. I wonder if he still believes in this slogan.

Some Christians claim every tragedy is part of God’s mysterious plan. If it happens to you, it is because God wants to make you stronger. I suppose that is sometimes true, but equally true is that tragedy sometimes drives a person crazy or causes them to commit suicide or homicide.

Some answers offered by Christians I have found to be simply cruel. A young child who has lost a parent is

told God needs your mother in heaven. Really! The all-powerful and loving God needs your mother more than you? Give me a break! How cruel!

So then what can we say about all of our whys? At least this. It is important to articulate them—at least the Psalmist thought so when he railed against God. In the church we must give others the space to do the same.

And it is true, too, as the Beatles song goes, that we “get by with a little help from our friends.” That is why we have a church. We must stick together to make sense out of the chaos that surrounds us. Alone we are doomed.

The story is told of St. Francis hoeing his garden one day when someone asked him what he would do if he were to suddenly learn that he would die before sunset that very day. St. Francis replied, “I would continue hoeing my garden.”

In the same way, despite our questions, like St. Francis, we keep on—keep on loving, keep on building communities, keep on fighting poverty and racism. St. Paul was right when he said, “We don’t yet see things clearly. We’re squinting in a fog, peering through a mist” (1 Corinthians 13:12

MSG).

Last week on his weekly YouTube broadcast on 1 Corinthians 13 (available on the Shakespeare Presbyterian Church in Shakespeare, Ont., YouTube channel), my son said that in the end it all comes down to love. At first I thought that this was a stark and simplistic thing to say. I wondered, how can love be enough? How can it be the answer in the face of tragedy and loss? Yet that is what St. Paul also said when he wrote that there are three things to help us live in the chaos of life, in the midst of unanswerable questions: faith, hope and love. And of the three, love is the most important one.

The Greeks were right when they maintained that you needed more than one word to cover the meaning of love, as it encompasses everything from sex and friendship to sacrificial love. The one caveat here is that the cost of the kind of love and compassion of which St. Paul spoke is high, but it is also the path of personal blessing and the road to blessing others.

I am thankful for my son’s and St. Paul’s reminder that sometimes there are even more important things in this life than answers to our questions.

ECUMENICAL CHAPLAIN NEEDED FOR BROCK UNIVERSITY

The Brock University Ecumenical Chaplaincy (BUEC) Board of Directors is looking for a half time Chaplain (approx. 20 hours per week) to support the faith life and spiritual exploration of Brock University students. The Ecumenical Chaplain engages the students through the development and facilitation of programs and student clubs that explore issues of faith, religion, spirituality, and questions of morality.

As well, the Chaplain supports the spiritual health and well-being of students, faculty and staff through offering pastoral care. The Ecumenical Chaplain works in a context of uncertainty for the future of religion, among students who value flexibility, openness, critical thinking, and a changing religious attitude.

The Chaplain works out of the Faith & Life Centre and is part of a broader team that includes colleagues from other Christian denominations and other faiths. The Chaplain is accountable to a Board of Directors (BUEC) with representatives from the chartered denominations (Anglican, Presbyterian, United) and the University. The salary and allowances are competitive and include two months’ vacation.

A successful candidate will have, at least, a degree in theology, be recognized as a faith leader by at least one of the three charter denominations (Anglican, Presbyterian, and United), have at least 5 years’ experience in ministry, and have formal training in counselling and adult learning. The successful candidate will build strong collaborative relationships with many university groups, will bring a balanced perspective to their work, and will help students to be curious about faith and to think carefully about faith and spirituality.

Preference in the selection process will be given to candidates who are ordained ministers, and those with a Master of Divinity (MDiv) or greater. We ask that all interested parties submit to their application to Larry Beverly (Chair of BUEC) no later than October 15, 2020. Please submit your resumes through email to lbeverly@cogeco.ca.

BUEC is committed to diversity and the principles of Employment Equity and invites applications from all qualified candidates. As well, we will accommodate the needs of the applicants in line with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) throughout all stages of the selection process. Please inform us of any accommodation requests as we proceed through the selection process.



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

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LEADERSHIP

Reinventing Our Online Presence

By Steve Langham, John Malone,
Andrew Reid and Charlene Beynon,
New St. James Presbyterian Church in
London, Ont.

Our journey was prompted by our office administrator attending a workshop on church websites, facilitated by Barb Summers, Associate Secretary of Communications at The Presbyterian Church in Canada national office.

Last updated in 2015, the website for New St. James Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., was in need of attention. An ad hoc website committee of four volunteers was convened in July 2019. Our original goal was to hold three meetings, identify what was working well, address what needed updating along with what was missing, outline an action plan and move forward. Nine months later, after many meetings, emails and hours of work, and in the midst of a pandemic with worship and church activities suspended, we launched a redesigned website with an enhanced social media presence. Please check us out at newstjames.ca.

Developing the Site

Committee members represented a diversity of skill sets, including technological and website expertise, familiarity with the congregation and church culture, as well as administrative and project management skills. Early on, we agreed that it was important to articulate the primary audience. We learned that, although the site can be a valuable resource for current members, we needed to focus on those looking for a church home and those new to the congregation. It is vital to confront the reality that a digital presence is increasingly important for churches. Visitors are more likely to visit your website or social media before making a visit in person. Website visitors also want to get key information easily and quickly. For many of us, this is a very different way of communicating. Barb Summers was instrumental in our start-up phase and has continued to be a valued expert and sounding board as we have moved forward.

We critiqued the current site for its strengths, limitations and gaps, and began to envision a new site. At this stage, it's very tempting to expand the project's scope and start addressing

many possibilities. We purposefully decided to focus on the website and an enhanced social media presence.

With these ends in mind, we recognized the importance of building momentum and engaging others. Session was updated through regular reports. Guidelines were developed for writing website text. Group leaders and committee leads were invited to update their sections and submit photos to complement the text. We also identified gaps and invited others to profile new activities and opportunities that had not been previously included. A committee member collated the submissions, ensured a consistent format, provided support with writing and editing, and ensured that the authors signed off on their submissions. Our pulpit supply minister prepared an engaging and welcoming video, and we updated the profiles and photos of our minister and staff, adding the clerk of Session and our interim moderator. This stage requires significant time when dealing with a large number of authors, ensuring expectations are clear, helping authors meet needed deadlines by sending out "friendly" reminders, while also being flexible and helping where needed.

New Platform

In building our new site, it was important to determine what type of website platform was needed. We wanted the platform to have capacity for future growth and to be easily updated in-house without having to rely on external vendors. One committee member reviewed a number of platforms, including the services provided by the PCC, and prepared preferred options for the committee to review. Criteria included site portability, ease of use, social media capability, number of email accounts, domain name registration and hosting, etc. The Committee reviewed the summary and identified Sharefaith as the preferred choice. This was included in a series of other recommendations that was approved by Session in November 2019. One member served as the Web Administrator and assumed primary responsibility for designing and populating the site with input from committee members.

Pilot Testing and Launch

Aiming to pilot test the draft site by



early March 2020, 12 volunteers were recruited through the church bulletin and personal contact. The reviewers represented different ages, with varying computer expertise and time associated with New St. James. In addition, five individuals were invited to provide targeted reviews of specific sections. Surveys that could be submitted online or in hard copy were developed for those reviewing the entire site and for those providing targeted reviews. Three weeks were allowed to provide feedback, and a reminder was sent out at the beginning of the third week, which generated additional responses. In total, 11 of the 12 who volunteered to review the full site provided feedback and all five who were invited to review specific sections provided targeted reviews—an amazing response rate. To thank the volunteers, we held a draw for a \$50 gift certificate. The feedback was instrumental in enhancing the site and was reviewed by the entire committee.

A concerted effort was made to launch the new site two weeks later on Easter weekend. It was agreed that the site was ready and that further adjustments could be made after the launch. With worship suspended due to COVID-19, Session members were notified and an announcement was included in our newsletter that was emailed/mailed to all congregants. Not the launch we had hoped for, yet still pretty exciting!

An Unexpected Challenge

Gmail addresses were set up for the website contacts so that personal email addresses would not be used. Setting up these email addresses has been a significant challenge for many and time consuming for the committee. To address these issues, one email address was set up as a helpline, and a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) guide was developed. Ideally, these supports should be set up in advance, and more notice pro-

vided for what to anticipate. In different times, it would have been much easier to offer a group tutorial.

It's Not Over Yet!

Developing the website has been a major investment of time and effort. It is important that infrastructures are in place to support the ongoing development and maintenance of the site. It is essential that we as a congregation continue to "think website and social media" so that upcoming events are posted and the site continues to be current and engaging. Section leads have been identified to ensure that the website keeps current. A Facebook team has been convened to enhance our social media presence, and a Media Advisory Committee (MAC) is being formed. The MAC will ensure the coordination of our various forms of communication, including our newsletter, social media and website.

Promoting the website and social media is an important challenge in times when services and activities have been suspended. To get the word out, we have added the web address to email signature lines; we have been using the church's sign and newsletter; promotional magnets are being printed; and we are planning a special coffee time to celebrate as a congregation. We are very cognizant that not everyone has Internet access.

Our goal is to promote the website and social media as timely tools among many in helping us keep connected as a congregation and in engaging others to come and join us.

Lessons Learned Along the Way

These are some of the lessons we have learned along the way. We hope they may be useful as you customize your journey:

1. Have a team that includes someone who knows the Internet, a strong administrative leader, someone who thinks quickly outside the box;
2. If you don't know where to start, talk to the PCC Communications Office (communications@presbyterian.ca) and look at resources available on the PCC website;
3. First priority is to determine the primary audience for the end product—members, newcomers, outsiders, visitors? Before every decision, ask how it speaks to that audience;
4. Stay focused on the task at hand. Don't try to cover every aspect of the digital world. Creating a good communication medium is more important than complex digital wizardry;
5. Set firm limits on what will or will not be included;
6. Make the most of experts to build the site;
7. Take as long as it takes to produce a well-designed site;
8. Remember that a website is a transient thing—what serves the purpose today will not work forever, nor should you expect it to;
9. Recruit a wide range of non-expert testers: computer novices, children, parents, grandparents;
10. Build in an easy updating system right from the start. Keeping the website current is essential to avoid staleness; and finally,
11. Put together a team to monitor different sections and to keep them updated. Don't leave it all up to one person.

For more information, contact Charlene Beynon at cbeynon@newstjames.ca.

Free websites for ministries and congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Thinking about creating or redesigning your church's website? The PCC Communications team is available to help. Funded through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing, PCCWeb is a free web hosting and technical support service for congregations and ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. To learn more, visit presbyterian.ca/pccweb.



LEADERSHIP

Lament and Change



By the Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand, on appointment through the PCC with the Presbyterian Church in Malawi

As conversations are wont to do these days, the topic among a small group of ministers I was meeting with turned to COVID-19. The specific question was, "What changes to our everyday ministries do you lament?"

One of my colleagues talked about not being able to visit a dying parishioner. The family appreciated his regular phone calls, but the minister really lamented that they could not be there at this saint's death bed. Prayer over the phone just didn't compare with holding someone's hand as you commend them to God's eternal care. Another minister missed having congregational worship, lamenting that while the music online was good, it could never replace a group of people singing their hearts out to Jesus.

One of the goals the facilitator had in mind when asking the question was to allow ministers to lament, to publicly acknowledge their grief at something that was lost, and in doing so to help the ministers mourn an important part of who they are and what they do. In this case, the public health practices and restrictions put in place in response to COVID-19 disrupted normal, good ways of doing ministry. Lamenting the loss of something good—pastoral care at a death bed, or corporate worship—was cathartic.

But it was more than that. As the conversation developed, a different dimension of lament appeared. Another colleague astutely observed that, "If you want to do a new thing, lament has got to be a part of it." There has been a lot of talk about how COVID-19 could bring about new forms of ministry. By necessity many congregations have moved worship online. Now, months into this new regime of social distancing and restrictions on gathering, the initial shine has worn for some. This isn't to say that online worship is not good. It is to say that in moving into a moment of lament, we

can see some of the ways that face-to-face worship was better than online worship. Our lament points to a good thing lost, forcing us to ask what was good about it and why we grieve its loss.

This is true not only of congregational life. A recent 25th wedding anniversary party couldn't include the parents of the groom. The father was immune compromised, and so couldn't risk infection by getting together even with a modest number of people. Both the parents and the couple lament the times we live in, saddened that circumstances beyond control force families apart at times when they should rightfully be together. Realizing how much they relied on family gatherings for their relationship has challenged them to reach out more often, to do things in smaller groups, to find new ways of connecting.

When we acknowledge the good that has been lost, when we lament, we can move forward into something new because we know what matters most. It sounds good, except this is not really how the Biblical record presents lament. Often, it seems, the people of God mistake circumstances of their own making for circumstances beyond their control. Take Psalm 44 for example. The first part of the Psalm, vv. 1–8, is all about how God has acted to save God's people in the past. These are the good times that they are about to lament because in the second part they lament that God seems to have forgotten them. They plead that God will remember them and come and save them. The lament in this case seems justified because horrible things have come upon them, taking away the good things that they had before.

What we know about God's people though is that they almost never can acknowledge that they have acted against God. In fact, they are almost always delusional. In this Psalm, they say:

All this has come upon us,
yet we have not forgotten you,
or been false to your covenant.
Our heart has not turned back,
nor have our steps departed
from your way,
yet you have broken us in the
haunt of jackals,
and covered us with deep
darkness. (Psalm 44:17–19)

The reality that we know from other parts of the Bible, like the prophets, is that the people almost always forget God and break his covenant in deeply offensive ways. They neither worship God properly nor treat each other with justice. Their protests sound like a child who has been caught stealing cookies saying, "It isn't my fault! I didn't like the lunch that you made me!" They can't see that they are at fault but instead blame their parent.

It would be theologically dangerous to suggest that COVID-19 is a form of divine punishment. We can legitimately lament the losses we have suffered because of the pandemic. But there are other places of lament and potential renewal in our society at the moment. I think of the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. In Canada, Indigenous Peoples have drawn attention to the deplorable conditions they live in. As Christians, we should earnestly want to change the situation, create new possibilities for justice. In these cases, we must listen to others lament dreams deferred and promises broken. For change to come we must pierce through our own self-serving forms of "lament," which are really unjustified complaining, and realize that we have grieved God by breaking covenant.

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JUSTICE

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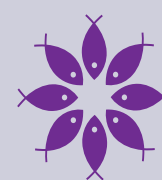


Members of the National Indigenous Ministry Council of the PCC met with the moderator and some denominational staff in June to discuss urgent concerns and severe circumstances facing many Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The discussions involved issues of insufficient housing, poor access to health care, police violence, the lack of safe drinking water on First Nations' reserve lands, impinged rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and broken treaties, particularly violation of land rights, discrimination, and the complex implications of intergenerational

trauma on communities that have been targeted through colonial instruments like the residential school system.

The church must stand in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and work for an end to all forms of systemic racism against Indigenous Peoples and communities. A variety of statements, studies and letters have been created by The Presbyterian Church in Canada in response to these issues. Members of the church are encouraged to use them in their own advocacy for justice efforts. Visit presbyterian.ca/justice-indigenous-peoples.

Presbyterians Sharing supports Indigenous ministries and advocates for justice for all Indigenous Peoples in our ongoing commitment to long-term healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.



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Prison Chaplaincy Past and Present: A Vital Ministry of the PCC

By the Rev. Dr. Glenn McCullough, RP

"I was in prison and you visited me..." (Matthew 25:36).

The PCC has a long history of ministry in Canadian prisons, where chaplains have been called to play many roles—offering spiritual care and comfort to inmates, and also advocating for reform of the prison system as a whole. This vital work continues today.

Historically it was chaplains who, for example, opposed the practice of corporal punishment in prisons. We see this in the Brown Commission of 1848—the first government inquiry into conditions in Canadian prisons—which offered a scathing indictment of "brutalizing" practices at Kingston Penitentiary. The commission noted that it was the chaplains who had continually expressed opposition to these cruel practices, but that their prophetic voice went unheard. Likewise, chaplains were instrumental in establishing both libraries and schools in Canadian institutions, and in the Statute of 1851, they were officially given responsibility over "the chapel, the school, and the library." And it was chaplains who led the charge for humane treatment of young offenders. For over 20 years in their annual

reports, for example, the chaplains at Kingston Penitentiary pressed this issue, advocating for a unique program of rehabilitation for young inmates, including education, work training and recreation. It took many years, but this program was eventually implemented through legislation in 1908.

In short, the prophetic voice of chaplaincy has historically emphasized rehabilitation rather than retribution, transformation rather than punishment, based on the Gospel message of a God who forgives. And out of this history, the principles of Restorative Justice took shape, principles that have become integral to the work of the Canadian correctional system today.

Restorative Justice seeks to repair the damage done by criminal acts, by bringing offenders and victims into meaningful contact, encouraging offenders to take responsibility for their actions, and allowing victims and communities a chance to assist in shaping offenders' obligations. In short, Restorative Justice shifts the emphasis from impersonal systems to personal relationships. It provides opportunities to heal damaged relationships, in both individuals and communities, through meaningful acts of reconciliation. Chaplains continue to play a vital role in this process,

as mediators between offenders and the wider community.

In my work as the PCC representative on the Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy for Corrections Canada, I have had the privilege of meeting many passionate and dedicated chaplains across the country. And I have seen the esteem in which they are held by both inmates and prison staff, as a vital spiritual presence in a very constrained institutional setting. As one Warden told me, "My chaplain is the first person I would hire, and the last person I would let go of in this institution."

While chaplains continue the important work of spiritual care, advocacy and Restorative Justice, their role is also changing to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse inmate population. Today correctional chaplains are responsible for coordinating a multi-faith team of spiritual leaders and volunteers from all traditions. Together they seek to meet the diverse spiritual needs of all offenders, by managing dietary needs, facilitating various spiritual practices, observing traditional ceremonies and holy days, and by connecting offenders with religious communities outside the institution. In all of these roles, lead chaplains act both as representatives of their own faith tradition, and as facilitators



tors of all faith traditions. Chaplains are also increasingly called to understand the unique mental health needs of inmates as they provide one-on-one counselling, and take on the growing administrative duties of case management.

In these changing times, our PCC seminaries continue to support the training of future chaplains with innovative and relevant programs. The new Master of Pastoral Studies (MPS) program at Knox College, for example, not only grounds students in the Reformed tradition, but also introduces them to various models of mental health and psychotherapy and describes how these models can be integrated with Christian faith. MPS students are equipped to serve in various spiritual care settings, including prisons, hospitals and various faith-based and non-profit social service agencies.

Congregations also have a vital role to play in prison ministry. Chap-

lains often tell me how difficult it is for offenders to find acceptance in church communities, and to find a church home when they leave their institutions. To former inmates, most churches don't feel like welcoming communities, and many congregations are not aware of their hidden barriers. It is so easy for an "us and them" mentality to creep into our thinking and our behaviour, even in ways that we don't notice. What we need is churches that understand radical hospitality, that break down barriers to real community, and where people from all backgrounds and contexts can feel welcome and accepted. This frontline congregational work is not easy, and it takes concerted effort. But the rewards are worth it when we see the evidence of lives transformed by communities centred in Jesus Christ. After all, it was Christ who said that, in serving those in prison, we are actually serving Him.

INTERNATIONAL

To Canada with Love, from Taiwan

By International Ministries

"Carry each other's burdens, and you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

March 20 was a special day for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. International Ministries received an unexpected offer of support from the Acting General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), the Rev. Chhoa Lam-Sin. Knowing that the COVID-19 pandemic was causing havoc among their many church partners worldwide, the Rev. Chhoa offered prayers for our safety and health.

Taiwan had experienced the pandemic, but it was exceptionally well-contained and monitored by the Taiwanese government and the Centre for Disease Control (CDC). As of July 2020, only seven deaths had been recorded in Taiwan as a result of COVID-19.

Feeling extremely blessed and finding it hard to imagine the impact COVID-19 was having among church friends around the world, and while they continued a "fairly routine schedule," the PCT explored ways for their church to offer encouragement and concrete support. They reached out to their historic partners, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the United Reformed Church, the Church of Scotland and the Church of Wales; the latter three being in the United Kingdom.

In consultation with their Church and Society Committee, they asked how they could support their global partners and respond to the COVID-19 global pandemic. In Taiwan, the PCT has close ties with mission hospitals. In Taipei, the Mackay Memorial Hospital is named after the first Canadian missionary in the north, the Rev. George Leslie Mackay, who arrived in 1871. The hospital is one of the largest medical centres in Taiwan today. It was difficult for them to understand how it is that the PCC does not administer any care homes or hospitals.

The PCT then asked if there was a PCC mission where the participants were directly affected by the pandemic. Two missions were considered, and the PCT graciously supported both with "love gifts."

Evangel Hall Mission in Toronto, Ont., has been serving individuals experiencing homelessness, poverty, and mental and physical health challenges in downtown Toronto

since 1913. When the number of COVID-19 cases started to rise in Toronto in March, and the government began implementing closures, quarantine and isolation measures, Evangel Hall Mission faced some difficult decisions. They provide essential services to Toronto's homeless, but when confronted with a shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), they had to scramble to figure out how to keep services going without putting clients and staff at risk. After a brief pause, they started reintroducing services. But without PPE, there were limitations as to what could be done. Even though they could not safely receive guests into their space, they served take-away food at the door. Concern grew as Toronto's hot summer weather arrived, but with the arrival of many boxes of PPE supplies from Taiwan, plans began to reopen their space safely. Evangel Hall Mission is thrilled with the support from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, as it has enabled them to provide all staff and guests with the PPE, keeping everyone safe. These gifts have been a blessing.

Anamiewigummig (Kenora) Fellowship Centre also received a love gift, helping them provide healthy meals for people facing food insecurity, a safe space to gather in community and a shelter for people to cool off during an intense heat wave, reducing

the risk of heat stroke and dehydration. The Centre was a safe place to offer food and shelter during this difficult pandemic. The gift was greatly appreciated; an example of two communities separated by 10,000 km, helping to support and care for each other's needs.

The gifts from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan were accompanied by many boxes of PPE, including isolation gowns and fabric disposable face masks, shipped from Taiwan to Canada. Edward Chung, co-chair of the Canadian Mackay Committee, shared the news that 150,000 surgical masks were donated by the Mackay Memorial Hospital to be distributed to Mackay's hometown in Oxford County, the Scarborough Health Network, the PCC national office and other medical facilities related to former PCC missionaries in Guelph, Owen Sound and Cobourg.

Louise Gamble, PCC mission staff in Taiwan, is completing her work on the PCC mission records in Taiwan. The students at TamKang High School—where she lives—collected 6,000 face masks for distribution in Canada. These students were creative in finding so many masks! Mackay Memorial Hospital held a donation ceremony in Taipei on June 18, before shipping their gifts to Canada.

In Taiwan, it was not only the church that expressed the need to



respond and support global partners. President Tsai Ing-wen publicly expressed that out of humanitarian concern, Taiwan could not stand by while countries were in need of help. Under her leadership, Taiwan sent medical supplies and millions of face masks to 80 countries worldwide.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has celebrated the long-standing rela-

tionship with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan for more than a century. But this outpouring of prayers, empathy and support is especially appreciated. The PCT has truly responded to the Apostle Paul's call to share the burdens of this time, and we give thanks for their friendship and the faith we share in Jesus Christ. We praise God for these blessings!



(Left to right): Y-S Columbus Leo, the Rev. Glynis Williams, the Rev. Luis Liang, the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald, the Rev. Dr. Beth McCutcheon, Edward Chung.

INTERNATIONAL



Two Ecumenical Accompaniers walking together.

Providing a Protective Presence for Children in Palestine

By Shaun MacDonald, Former Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine-Israel

Cordoba School lies in one of the most repressed geographical areas of the West Bank. Originally a school for girls, boys now also attend up to sixth grade, and there is a kindergarten connected to the premises. My team was tasked with providing a protective presence for these children and reporting whether their access to education was being restricted. We were required to be there twice a day, five days per week, for approximately two hours.

The children at Cordoba were at first suspicious of us. They had gotten to know the previous team, but we were new. We would have to earn their trust. The kindergartners took an immediate liking to us as we carried in and assembled colourful new furniture for their classroom on one of our first days. We watched as these little ones navigated their way through the checkpoints and centuries-old, crumbling walkways covered in barbed wire, being confronted with heavily armed soldiers and settlers daily. We got to know the older ones through broken Arabic/English chit-chat, high-fives, kicking soccer balls around and showing them photos on our mobiles. Some days they were mischievous,

and a few always eyed us warily. All of them were traumatized in some way from growing up here. There were constant violent clashes outside the main checkpoint to the street on which the school is located; teachers were often denied entry, so students showed up with no educational program; there are absolutely no extra-curricular activities; the school day is shortened for security reasons; and the number of night raids, detentions and general level of violence is higher than average.

The H2 area of Hebron is under the authority of the Israeli military, with over 100 checkpoints and roadblocks, making freedom of movement within H2 often impossible for the nearly 40,000 Palestinians who live there. Inside H2, there is a Closed Military Zone around a hill called Tel Rumeida, where Palestinians are forbidden from entering unless their ID card number corresponds to a permanent address within the area. Once you move out, you cannot come back. Even permanent residents, after manoeuvring through the checkpoints, cannot drive on the roads or even walk for the most part on the main street (Shuhada Street—once the most vibrant commercial neighbourhood in the city). The doors of the shops and homes were welded shut when the Israeli military shut the street down over

20 years ago, so locals are forced to enter their homes through rooftop doorways. Cordoba School provides education for the children who grow up in this desolate district.

There are three Israeli settlements¹ near Cordoba School, as well as an army base across the street in what used to be the main bus station. Over the years, children and teachers have faced violence and harassment from settlers and soldiers alike, with settlers attempting to burn the school down on three separate occasions. Enrolment has dropped significantly. We met with a local resident, Ms. Abu-Haikal, whose family home is next to the newest of the Israeli settlements. Her teenage grandniece had been attacked with pepper spray by settlers on the way home from school a few days prior and had not left the house since, refusing to go back to school.

The friction was made evident whenever large groups of settlers or soldiers would show up outside the settlement near the checkpoint entryway to the school. The kids would come running out of school at the end of day, skipping, jumping, playing and then stop cold in their tracks. They would stare with a mix of curiosity and fear, turning to look at us and then back at the heavily armed group past which they would have to walk. “*Tamam, Tamam,*” we would say: “It’s



Cordoba school in the West Bank.



Assembling new furniture.

okay.” Some would always linger until the groups dispersed. Sometimes we would become the targets of harassment, but that is the point of protective presence—making the vulnerable less apt to be targets.

Near the end of my time in Hebron I had many questions. Did we make a difference? There was a squad of three girls with whom we had developed a rapport. We would jokingly pick on each other: some days they would pretend to not know us, then run away laughing. Other days they would hang around playfully pestering us for an hour. On one of our last days at Cordoba, they asked for my notebook and pen, then asked my teammates and I to spell our names, under the guise that they were “practicing their English.” They scurried away and huddled together with the notebook and pen, whispering, laughing and pointing back at us. Each time I approached to get my things back they waved me away. This went on for about 20 minutes. Finally, they handed back my things and quickly stuffed a tightly folded piece of paper in my vest pocket, before running away laughing and looking back at us. I unfolded the piece of paper to find a message, in (somewhat broken) English, that had our names at the top, two little hearts and the phrase “I Love You” in the middle, and their names at the bot-

tom. Maybe that was the only phrase they knew, I could not be sure, but they felt safe around us. That was all that mattered.

FOOTNOTE

¹ “Settlements” are Jewish-Israeli-only cities, towns and villages and outposts that have been established in the occupied Palestinian Territories (and the Golan Heights). While settlements are legal under Israeli law, they are illegal under international law as per the Fourth Geneva Convention. Those living in settlements are Jewish-Israeli citizens, called settlers. They tend to live in gated communities with armed guards where Palestinians are not allowed to enter. Hebron and Jerusalem are the only places where settlers live directly in the centre of a Palestinian city.

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INTERNATIONAL

Struggling to Survive in Lebanon

By International Ministries

Through International Ministries, The Presbyterian Church in Canada supports national church partners and Christian agencies around the world by sending mission staff and providing grants. Gifts from Presbyterians Sharing provide core funding for this work. Mission staff work alongside our partners on short- or long-term assignments. They are currently working in areas of Bible translation, development work, medical care, lay education training, teaching in prison school, fighting racism, welcoming refugees, and so much more. These staff are “living links,” opening windows into worlds that are sometimes difficult to imagine.

Financial grants allow our partners to expand and develop programs important to them, including theological education, leadership development, outreach and evangelism. Pastoral training is equipping Indigenous women for ministry in Guatemala, while the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre in Nepal welcomes people who are shunned from their communities due to mental illness. We also support theological institutions in Malawi, Ghana, Nigeria, Cuba, Taiwan and Lebanon. In addition to providing excellent Reformed education, we share theological discussions and debates, a sign of real engagement and respect, which is what partnership is about.

The current worldwide pandemic has challenged many of our partners. This is particularly true for the Near East School of Theology (NEST), a small seminary in Beirut, Lebanon. With economies collapsing, record numbers of refugees without safe haven, and violent clashes occurring in many cities, including Lebanon, NEST is struggling to survive.

Dr. George Sabra, President of



Dr. Sabra (centre) with students and faculty of the Near East School of Theology, on a trip to a nature reserve in the Lebanese mountains where a cedar tree was planted on the 150th anniversary of the theological seminary.

NEST, recently described the precarious situation they are experiencing given the collapse of the Lebanese currency and its drastic effect on daily life. Salaries have been reduced to almost nothing. Lebanon imports 80% of its food, paid for in U.S. dollars. And the Lebanese government is part of the problem. The situation is unpredictable, and fewer international students will study at NEST due to border restrictions and fear.

For those who live outside the Middle East, NEST provides the opportunity to learn and engage with Christians who are a significant minority witnessing to the gospel in their lives. A long-standing partner of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, this small Reformed Theological institution, established in 1932, trains 90% of the Protestant pastors in the Middle East, keeping alive the faith in the region where Jesus was born and where he taught. Our connection with NEST goes back to 1988, when the Rev. Dr. Ted and Betty Sivers, Canadian Presbyterians, served there during the Lebanese Civil War period. The seminary's commitment to excel-



Graduates and faculty at the NEST Convocation in 2016.

lence in teaching and scholarship is inspiring. It attracts talented young women and men for leadership in their churches and creates Christian community.

NEST plays a key ecumenical and inter-religious role, including engagement between Sunni and Shia clerics for which Dr. Sabra is well known and respected. It is difficult to express in words the compelling energy that is present among the students, professors and lecturers, as well as among the African and European students who study at NEST. Christians are a tiny minority in the region, but their

enthusiasm is rooted in their faith and the NEST community.

Dr. Sabra has expressed hope that “... we can pull through with God's help and the support of our network of friends. After all, this institution made it through two World Wars and crises in the region, including a 15-year-old war in Lebanon.”

To help support this strategic seminary through this particularly chaotic time, International Ministries hopes to raise additional funds, over and above the regular grant of \$16,000 provided by gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. Donations, small or large,

are gratefully received and will be matched up to \$50,000. These funds will be key to helping NEST teach and encourage students. Let this be an act of our common Christian faith, which began in this region.

Upon learning of this act of solidarity, Dr. Sabra wrote: “I know that NEST will not fail or cease to exist, if it has friends like the PCC.”

This is a difficult time for NEST, but they have hope for the future. With so much to lament these days, this small seminary is a beacon of hope in a turbulent religious landscape. Donate at presbyterian.ca/nest.

Praying for Beirut

In early August, a large fire in the Port of Beirut led to a devastating chemical explosion that resulted in extensive damage over much of the capital, along with widespread death, injury and displacement. The PCC continues to lift up all those affected by this tragedy in prayer.

Long-time PCC partner the Near East School of Theology (NEST) is located in Beirut and is a small Reformed theological institution that trains the majority of protestant pastors in the Middle East, fostering

faith in same region where Christ was born. The NEST building was badly damaged by the explosion. The glass windows, external doors, panels and even internal wooden doors were completely shattered on all eight floors of their building as well as the basement. While the employees and workers continue to work to clean the debris in the building, the longer term repair work will be financially difficult.

In an update from NEST's President, Dr. George Sabra, he ex-



Destruction at NEST offices following the Beirut explosion in August.

pressed his tremendous gratitude for all of the support NEST has re-

ceived thus far in response to the crisis: “Your response to our crisis

has been overwhelming. I am truly moved by the expressions of sympathy, concern and support which my office has received in a shower of e-mails. To know that NEST has so many true friends and supporters is a great source of comfort and encouragement.”

To help contribute to the rebuilding efforts, please visit presbyterian.ca/nest.

Presbyterian World Service & Development is also working with the international ACT Alliance to bring emergency relief to the people of Beirut. To learn more and to contribute to this appeal, visit WeRespond.ca/pwsd-beirut.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Faith as a Competency in Development

By Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Director

I am sometimes asked what makes PWS&D different from other organizations dedicated to development and relief work.

Aside from being governed by a committee representing Canadian Presbyterians from coast to coast, working through locally based church and non-church partners in the poorest countries and communities on our planet, leveraging resources and collaborations ecumenically through ACT Alliance, Canadian Foodgrains Bank and KAIROS, PWS&D is a faith-based agency and this helps to bring about sustainable results.

As a matter of fact, faith is considered a competency in development—taking faith into account when planning development and relief work is a way to achieve better results. Faith traditions in general may hinder or enhance development results, but by engaging faith leaders in the process we can aspire to affect behavioural change most effectively.

This is not about proselytizing or attempting to convert anyone to any particular religion, but rather recognizing the integral part that faith, and the hope that it offers, plays in the lives of the people we serve. In most places, faith is the lens through which people see the world. Faith leaders, in turn, have moral authority and can shape people's opinions.

In Latin America, for example, ACT Alliance members train pastors so that they can speak prophetically about gender-based violence issues and address practices that go against the tenets of the faith, resulting in fewer incidences of violence against women.

In Ghana, PWS&D supports the Presbyterian Church in Ghana's ministry to protect women wrongly accused of witchcraft. Working with church and local leaders, communities learn about human rights and that illness need not be equated with witchcraft, but rather attended to with the love and compassion that Christians are called to demonstrate.

When it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic, churches and faith communities are called to lead in raising awareness for prevention, countering stigma and discrimination, and supporting one another in this time of challenge.

Recognizing the central role that church leaders and faith-based organizations are playing in response to the pandemic, ACT Alliance places a high priority on engaging with and empowering church and faith leaders in combatting the coronavirus. Part of this means ensuring that local faith leaders are resourced and equipped to put proper practices in place.

When asked for one word that comes to mind when hearing people talk about faith and development, participants in a recent forum mentioned hope more often than any other word. People of faith have hope in challenging times.

As people of faith, let us do what we can to help bring about hope. Let us pray for faith leaders in the communities that we serve so that they



In Ghana, faith leaders help to reconcile relationships between women accused of witchcraft and their local communities.

can be most effective in bringing about the behaviours needed to ensure that God's love and peace may

prevail. Let us continue to pray for and support those who are most in need of hope in these times.

Women Peacebuilders Key to Just Recovery

By Rachel Warden

Partnerships Manager at KAIROS

These days in Canada we often hear the phrase "We're stronger together." But stronger how? And who, precisely, are "we"?

COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerability of certain communities and, in my work with Indigenous Peoples, migrant workers and women peacebuilders, I have learned that we are only as strong as the most vulnerable among us.

Indeed, this is echoed in the Just Recovery Principles recently launched by more than 150 civil society groups, which state: "In a globalized world, what happens to one of us matters to all of us."

While Canada's financial assistance is understandably focused on national recovery, there is also a need to increase global assistance, especially to human rights defenders and women peacebuilders, if we want to emerge from this pandemic as a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.

For example, KAIROS' women, peace and security partners in Colombia, the Philippines, West Bank, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo have been laying the groundwork for just and sustainable peace for years, for decades in some



A woman in South Kivu, DR Congo, washes her hands as a COVID-19 precaution during a KAIROS Women, Peace and Security program-related meeting. PHOTO CREDIT: HÉRITIERS DE LA JUSTICE.

cases. They work with a number of the world's most vulnerable communities at this time when these vulner-

abilities have increased, especially for women. All report an increase in gender-based violence, including

military repression and human rights violations targeted at women who are traditional community leaders.

In response to COVID-19, these women peacebuilders are creatively adapting their programs to reach marginalized women and ensure their voices are heard. Our partners are using the Internet to reach as many communities as possible to train women community leaders, even in remote areas. They educate them about the virus and how to stop its spread, and deliver food and other critical supplies.

And, significantly, they have not stopped advocating for peace. Our partners teach us that when women victims of violence are provided with the services and care needed to heal, restore dignity and claim their rights, including psychosocial and legal support, and human rights training, they become active peacebuilders and human rights defenders themselves. Their voices are essential to building sustainable peace.

Canada recognizes the importance of these grassroots women peacebuilders. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) identifies gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the best way to eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful, inclusive and equitable world.

And yet, FIAP has been underfunded since its inception, in part because Canada's official development assistance (ODA) funding, at 0.26 percent, has been well below the international standard of 0.7 percent Gross National Income (GNI), much lower than countries such as Norway, which invests 0.94 percent of GNI.

Some may argue that Canada cannot afford to increase its ODA. But if we really believe that we are "in this together" and "stronger together," if we are listening to vulnerable communities in Canada and around the world, Canada cannot afford not to. If Canada wants to remain a credible advocate and key player in global multilateralism, we must back up our words with financial commitments as other progressive nations have done.

Women peacebuilders and other essential workers provide us with a glimmer of hope, a way forward based on the well-being, health, safety and peace for all. Right now, they need Canada's financial and political support. And we need their strength to heal from this pandemic—together.

**Excerpted from an article published on the KAIROS website. PWS&D provides ongoing support to KAIROS' women, peace and security project.*

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Responding to COVID-19 Globally

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

As the world continues to respond to COVID-19, the situation on the ground in every country and community is constantly changing. PWS&D is responding.

Local economies have been disrupted due to lockdowns, food security is a concern for many families, and precarious access to appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities is even more dangerous during a pandemic. While PWS&D initially supported efforts geared toward urgent action and life-saving projects through ACT Alliance, focus has now shifted to longer-term relief projects in vulnerable communities around the world.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, where over one million Rohingya people have sought shelter from the violence in Myanmar, social distancing is almost impossible in overcrowded refugee camps. In addition, access to necessary sanitation and hygiene facilities is difficult. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 through the camps, lockdowns have been instituted, devastating livelihood opportunities and leaving many food insecure.

In response, PWS&D is helping ensure families have access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, as well as providing livelihoods sup-



Using funds originally intended for other activities, partner staff in Malawi now teach community members hygiene practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

port and cash vouchers to those who need it most. The vouchers will help boost the local economy while also allowing families to meet their basic needs.

Somalia

Long before the outbreak of COVID-19, humanitarian conditions in Somalia were critical due to ongoing civil conflict, leaving over 2.6 million people displaced inside the country. Public systems are viewed as too weak to effectively respond to a COVID-19 outbreak. Government instituted lockdowns have severely impacted the economy, with internally displaced people—who depend on informal jobs—hardest hit.

PWS&D is supporting ACT Alliance member, Norwegian Church Aid, to provide livelihood and water, sanitation and hygiene support. Building on long-standing relationships of trust, the project will work with church leaders, whose voices are well respected, to ensure community ownership and success.

South Sudan

Like Somalia, years of civil war have left South Sudan more vulnerable to COVID-19. Only 22 percent of health facilities are fully functional, leaving almost half of the country without access to health care. To make matters worse, almost 60 percent of the population struggles to find food dai-

ly, leaving the country as one of the most at risk of a hunger pandemic due to coronavirus, according to the World Food Programme. PWS&D is helping ensure access to food and water, sanitation and hygiene services.

Palestine

As both the Israeli and Palestinian governments struggle to contain the outbreak of COVID-19, the pandemic has halted daily life and exacerbated entrenched social inequalities. In Palestine, more than 50,000 families fell below the poverty line due to COVID-19, presenting additional challenges to communities affected by the virus.

PWS&D is supporting ACT Alliance member, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, as they provide essential food and non-food items to those suffering due to COVID-19. Psychosocial support and public health messages on virus prevention will also be distributed in local languages.

Ongoing Needs in the Midst of a Pandemic

Much of this work has been made possible due to a generous donation by St. Andrew's – Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the church knew that countries in the developing world would feel the effects of the pandemic more deeply.



Distributions of food and hygiene kits were part of the initial COVID-19 response for many ACT Alliance members. PHOTO CREDIT: NCCP.

With unanimous approval from the congregation, the decision was made to gift \$100,000 from a bequest the congregation had received to support PWS&D's COVID-19 response through ACT Alliance.

In addition to ACT Alliance COVID-19 relief efforts, PWS&D continues to support long-term partners around the world to ensure that they can continue to serve the most vulnerable communities. By adjusting programs to comply with social distancing protocols and repurposing project funds that currently cannot be spent as intended, PWS&D continues our work to bring about a sustainable, compassionate and just world.

To learn more and support PWS&D's ongoing COVID-19 response, please visit WeRespond.ca/covid-19-response.

Supporting Meals in the Middle East

By Emma Clarke,
PWS&D Communications

Many people in Yemen, Syria and other conflict-affected countries in the Middle East live each day in a constant state of fear. Since 2011, protracted civil war has torn families from the comfort of their homes. Gone are the stability of the jobs and friendships they cherished.

The enormity of the situation is staggering. In Syria, the United Nations reports that 6.6 million people are internally displaced. In Yemen, 80 percent of the country is in need of protection or humanitarian assistance. Exacerbated by the changes to the economy brought on by COVID-19, food insecurity continues to rise.

When a family finds themselves without food for today or tomorrow, they often resort to making incredibly difficult decisions. Sometimes, a



Forced to flee their home due to conflict, Mohammed and his family sheltered in a cave for months, with limited access to food. PHOTO CREDIT: ADRA.

mother or father will go days without a meal so their children can eat. "We could only afford to eat one meal a day to conserve our supplies," recalled Mohammed, a teacher who sheltered in a cave with his family of

seven to keep safe from recurring air raids over his home in Yemen. Beyond borrowing money or begging for food, some do what no parent wishes to do, sell family members into forced early marriage or child labour.

COVID-19 has wreaked further havoc on the limited sense of stability many internally displaced persons have. Access to markets is difficult. When people arrive at a food stall, they're faced with elevated prices. With no work due to the pandemic and no government support system, even the basics are hard to come by.

As needs continue to mount, a little boost of food assistance can provide families with important stability and help steer them away from taking desperate measures. PWS&D's previous responses in Yemen and Syria, through Canadian Foodgrains Bank, included food baskets that made a critical difference: "One basket was

enough food to provide for my family for a whole month. It was a weight off my shoulders that I cannot describe."

With 4:1 matching funds from the Government of Canada, PWS&D is continuing to support vital relief efforts in Syria and Yemen. In Syria, through Canadian Foodgrains Bank programs in partnership with World Renew and Mennonite Central Committee, 7,400 families are receiving food baskets that help meet their daily needs. In Yemen, vouchers are allowing women and children from 1,150 households to buy flour, beans, oil, sugar and salt from local markets, as they require them.

When considering the extent to which this food assistance helped his family, Mohammed said, "With food basket distributions, I felt a ray of light shine on me for the first time in a long time... What may seem like a simple intervention has really changed my life."



With assistance from PWS&D, Mohammed and his family are now receiving the food they need to survive. PHOTO CREDIT: ADRA.

PWS&D is a member of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a partnership of 15 churches and church-based agencies working together to end global hunger.

UPDATES



Will We CY Again?

By Jo Morris, CY Coordinator

Planning for events of any kind is fraught with challenges at the best of times, but during a global pandemic those challenges rise to a new extraordinary level.

Canada Youth 2020 was cancelled.

In March, when the decision was made, the language was gentler than “cancel.” We talked about using postponed, delayed, rescheduled...those gentler words are often preferred. But the reality was not gentle. July 6–11, 2020, came and went, and hundreds of enthusiastic Presbyterians were not gathered together at Brock University, as had been the recent biennial habit. And the reality of that made CY2020’s theme, “No End in Sight” all the

more stark.

When there is No End in Sight... how do we plan? How do we imagine and re-vision for CY events when the landscape is constantly changing? When what we understand today may not be what we understand in a month, or a year from now? It is a daunting task, but there are some basics that will help the planning process.

1. The spirit of CY continues whether we’re together or not. So, it is important to remain grounded in that vibrant spirit of community and connection.

2. Assign the correct gifts and talents to the correct task. Currently, there are two groups that are already on the CY task. A small working group of medical and health professionals, all of whom have partici-



Various activities at Canada Youth 2018.

pated in leadership at CY events, is assembling COVID-19 information from regional health jurisdictions across Canada. This group will advise the CY planners regarding all health and safety precautions that

will need to be addressed for any kind of CY gathering. The welfare and safety of the CY community is the top priority.

CY also has an advisory team that is prayerfully considering what may be possible for CY programming in the future. These are leaders who have diverse CY experiences and reflect the unique variety of our denomination.

As the CY vision unfolds, additional people will be brought on board to put ideas in motion and plans in place.

3. Disruption does not need to be understood as a negative. Disruption may lead to innovation and open up new opportunities that were not thought possible. No two CY events have been exactly the same—sometimes that was planned. Other times it was because of circumstances beyond our control—the Ontario power blackout and SARS outbreak certainly affected CY2003.

4. A willingness to be daring in our thinking and responsive in our planning. The pandemic has radically changed our faith communities. To understand this well, the planners will need to listen attentively and then design programming that creatively responds to the needs that are expressed.

5. Communication is key! To listen well, CY planners will encourage audience participation through

questions, conversations, surveys, etc. Input and feedback will be sought through a variety of formats.

When do we start? Right now!

You can share your creative thoughts, your big ideas, your daring dreams for future CY events now. If you are a youth, parent, leader, young adult, lay person, clergy, elder, faith former or committee member, we would be excited to hear from you.

Here are a few questions that may get your creative juices flowing. Should we? Could we? Would we?

- Offer online options in the upcoming fall and winter (Topics to include: _____)?
- Consider a travelling CY road show designed with regional leadership?
- Rotate the usual CY tracks (Youth, Discipleship, Leadership) through one site, at different times?
- Host webinars or panel conversations with CY keynote speakers (I would love to hear and learn from _____)?
- Or...

Please submit your thoughts, ideas or questions to cy@presbyterian.ca.

The CY planners will post information as it is available. It will be exciting and so helpful to receive your concepts and reflections. Thank you for sharing in the work of this vibrant ministry.

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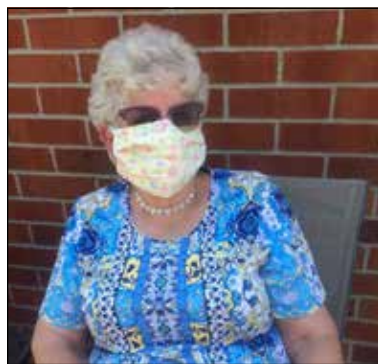
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GATHERINGS



Members of Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont.—Joan Ambrose (a member of the Mary and Martha Guild) and Nancy and Herman Vanderlaag—are pictured modelling masks made by Marlene Marrin on behalf of the Mary and Martha Guild. TOP PHOTO CREDIT: MARLENE MARRIN.



The Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa have a connection with St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., going back to the 1930s. Each year, they participate in the congregation's Remembrance Day service. Pictured at the service on November 10, 2019, are Jeffery Hill, President of the Regimental Association, RSM Drummond Robertson, LCol (Ret'd), the Rev. William MacLellan, worship leader, CO, LCol Gord Scharf, Don Tate (St. Giles elder) and the Hon. Col. Dan MacKay.



While the congregation has been gathering in cyberspace, the Rev. Gwen Ament of St. Marys Presbyterian Church in St. Marys, Ont., wanted a tangible way to see everyone. She printed people's names on various types of Popsicle sticks, including people who are new to the church through online worship. Then, she sent them to the Sunday School youth to colour. Pictured here is the finished creation, which is being mounted over a blue background for everyone to enjoy when they come together. It was an act that really touched people's hearts, the people of God.



Elmvale Presbyterian Church in Elmvale, Ont., was pleased to recognize two students from the congregation with a drive-by cake festivity to celebrate completing Grade 8 in this most unusual year. Grads Isabella (pictured with her mother, Angela) and Keegan will be entering secondary school in the fall in whatever form that takes. Congratulations to them both from their church family!



GATHERINGS



Glenview Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., has added Holy Humour Sunday to their worship calendar on the first Sunday after Easter. On the first Holy Humour Sunday, two comedians, the Rev. Dr. Jim Czegledi and the Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe, led worship and a Lunch and Learn after the service.



For many years, St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., has been supporting deployed soldiers of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa with care packages. Pictured with their care packages are five soldiers who were deployed to a base in Western Ontario to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Session at Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church in Scarborough, Ont., on behalf of the congregation, made and built "The Little Blessings Box" for the community to access outside the church while the local Bluffs Food Bank was closed. Fallingbrook is one of the founding partners of the Food Bank, and wanted to continue reaching out to those in need. The box has been quite a busy spot and will remain available long after COVID-19 is a distant memory! The signs inside read: "Take what you need! Leave what you can!" and "A simple action that is making a difference in our small corner of God's world." Pictured above is the Blessing Box as it was filled one day. Pictured right (left to right) are Siegi and Lynn Kaminski, Hilda Shaffelburg, and Liz and Jim Stark.



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont., held their first online worship service on March 22. The congregation has continued to meet online on Sunday mornings ever since and will likely continue until at least September. Online meetings allowed the congregation to have a Maundy Thursday communion service, Good Friday reflective family gathering and Easter Sunday celebration, while sheltering at home. The Rev. Barbara Molengraaf also hosts weekly online get-togethers, including "Pastor's Chat," "Wacky Wednesday" for children, and "Fun Friday." While COVID-19 has cancelled many events, it has not cancelled God's goodness. Rest in that, rejoice in that, and be so very reassured!



GATHERINGS



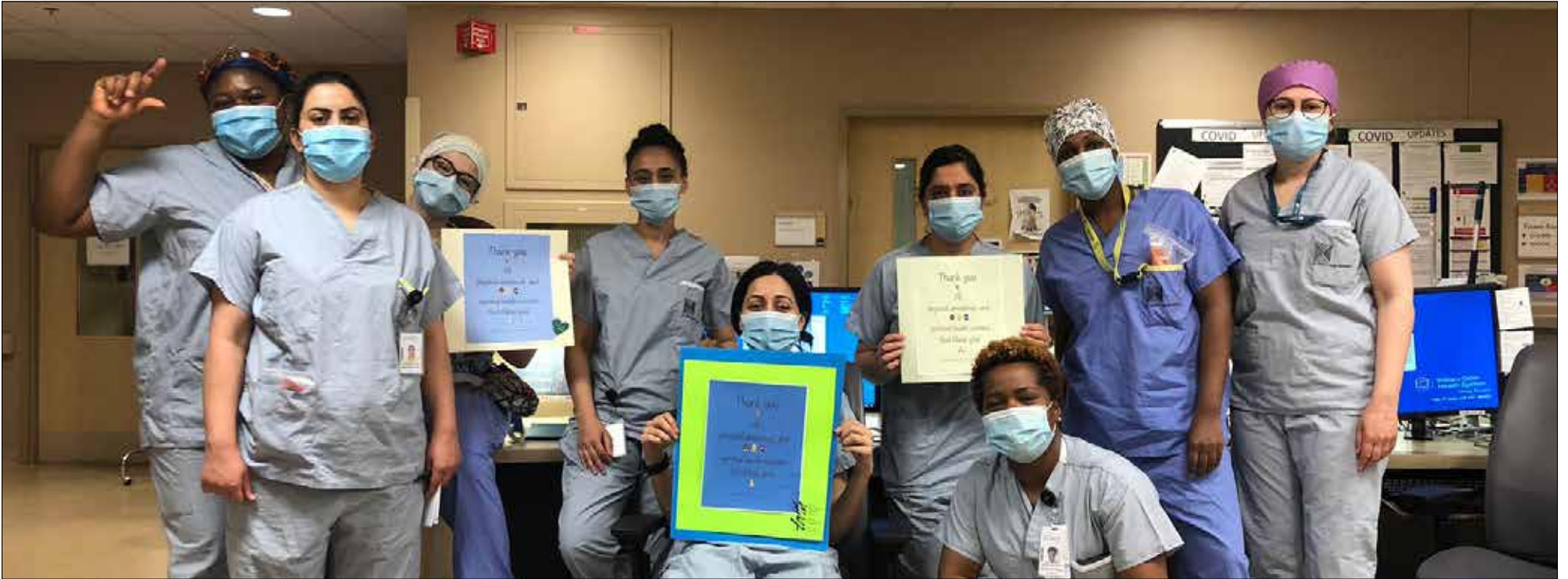
At St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont., monthly parking-lot trunk offerings have been added to give parishioners the opportunity to choose their method of giving. As well as being excellent distancing fellowship, it gives the Mission and Outreach Committee the ability to collect food donations to share as needed and distribute the *Our Daily Bread* devotional.



Folks from First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., participated in the Brockville March for Justice on June 6. Hundreds of people marched from Court House Green to City Hall in solidarity with anti-racism protests around the world. As the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr recounted, "It was a very peaceful protest and very inspiring." Pictured are protesters gathered at Court House Green, and taking a knee in front of City Hall.



GATHERINGS



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont., has six members who are health care workers in hospitals throughout the Greater Toronto Area. The congregation wanted to show love and appreciation for the sacrifices they are making, so church member Lee Janoschak made thank-you signs. The medical staff at a Brampton hospital, where one member works, posed with the signs prior to posting them on the walls where they could be seen by all.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hillsburgh, Ont., celebrated its usual June "Growth in the Lord Sunday" by delivering special bags of popcorn to the youth. The congregation also delivered graduation cards to those missing their graduation ceremonies. The gifts were well received—just one way to keep a connection with the kids during the prolonged separation.



On May 31, seven elders from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont., some with partners, formed a convoy of seven vehicles and visited 24 homes of members who were not able to access virtual worship services. Their visits took place outside where physical distancing measures could be maintained throughout the visit.



At Point Edward Presbyterian Church in Point Edward, Ont., members have been meeting online every Sunday morning for coffee/tea and conversation, which has helped keep their faith and friendship alive during these times.

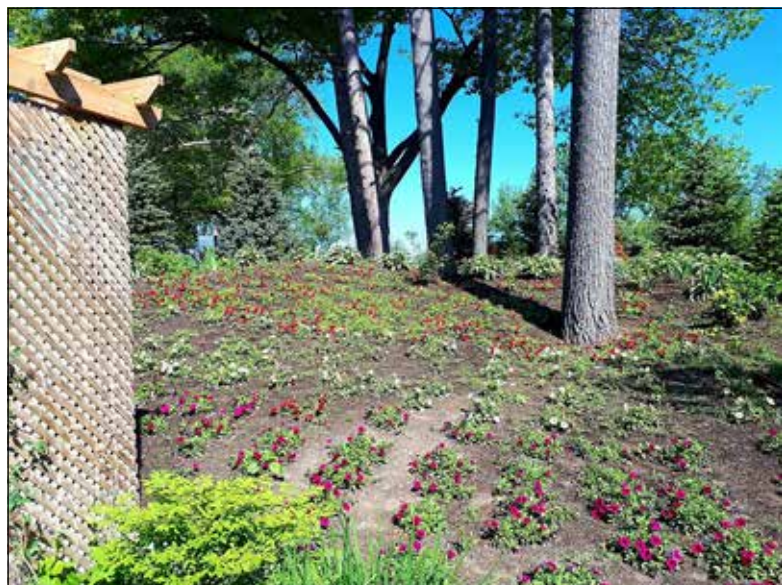


This summer, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont., offered a free Lunch Bag program that was gratefully accessed by the community. Volunteers at the church, following Health Unit guidelines, prepared the bags containing a real fruit juice box, sandwich, cookies, fruit, hand wipes, napkins and a scripture quote. People picked up the lunch bags outside the church.

GATHERINGS



As Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C., approached Pentecost Sunday in the midst of COVID-19 restrictions, the congregation invited the church family to prepare communion at home. Knowing that many members were living in isolated conditions in retirement residences, assisted living homes and long-term care centres, the congregation prepared and delivered Communion Kits to the front doors of the respective facilities. Each kit included pre-wrapped crackers, a box of grape juice, disposable communion cups, paper doily and a printed liturgy. After the appropriate sanitizing, the kits were delivered by staff to church members so that together, but apart, the circle around the communion table on Pentecost grew wider.



The Serenity Garden at Wasaga Beach Community Presbyterian Church in Wasaga Beach, Ont., has been flourishing. The congregation has a number of faithful volunteers who have been hard at work to keep the garden looking beautiful, even during these trying times. It is one way of keeping that sense of community alive and well.



Pictured above are two children from Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church in Scarborough, Ont., standing by the church-sponsored flower display for the local community. The congregation wanted to help brighten up the community for residents in this time of social distancing. They joined with local businesses to bring a smile to the neighbourhood with their beautiful displays.



St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont., created "Trees of Hope"; one at the church and the others at family homes. They are a sign of hope in pandemic times.



"Church cancelled: God at work." While Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., has been closed, the congregation was pleased to support the mission of the Krasman Centre in helping the vulnerable in the community this summer. Rooms in the church were made available to the Centre for seven days a week during the months of July and August. PHOTO CREDIT: ROGER POTTS.

GATHERINGS



Durham Presbyterian Church in Durham, N.S., held a Food Bank drive on Saturday, June 27, to help during this trying time of COVID-19. Many food and monetary donations were received. Pictured with the donations are donors Glenda Cluney and Patricia Emery.



Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., celebrated the end of the school year with surprise balloon gift drops on the doorsteps of all their children and youth. Pictured are sisters after receiving their gifts.



Marilyn Greer (left) and Donna Brown present the display at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon, Sask., marking the 75th anniversary of the Women's Camp at Camp Christopher, located on Christopher Lake in Northern Saskatchewan, where people of all ages gather to deepen their understanding and experience of God as Creator, Saviour, Sustainer and Lord. Since 1989, this property, owned by the Northern Synod of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, has shared summer programs with the United Church of Canada and the River Bend Presbytery.



Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., hosted an online discussion panel about anti-racism that included members of the community. As well, an online gathering for Asian members took place for encouragement.

GATHERINGS



For the past few years, First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., has participated in “The Big Give,” where churches across Canada bless their communities with generosity on the first Sunday in June. COVID-19 restrictions meant being creative in finding new ways to give. Through the generosity of the congregation, volunteers filled “blessing bags” (which were handmade by members) for the Brockville and Area Food Bank. The bags were filled with personal care items, and toys and snacks for children. Each bag also contained a handwritten postcard from our church, letting the recipients know we are praying for them, and providing church contact information. First PC delivered 50 blessing bags to be distributed throughout the summer. We are thankful for our many blessings, so we had the privilege to bless others.



The Rev. Shelly Chandler held “Drive-thru Prayer” at First and St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Churches in Pictou, N.S., to connect with parishioners during the church building closures due to COVID-19. Many parishioners, along with several people from the community, drove up to share concerns and a time of prayer. Pictured above is Drive-thru Prayer at First Presbyterian Church.

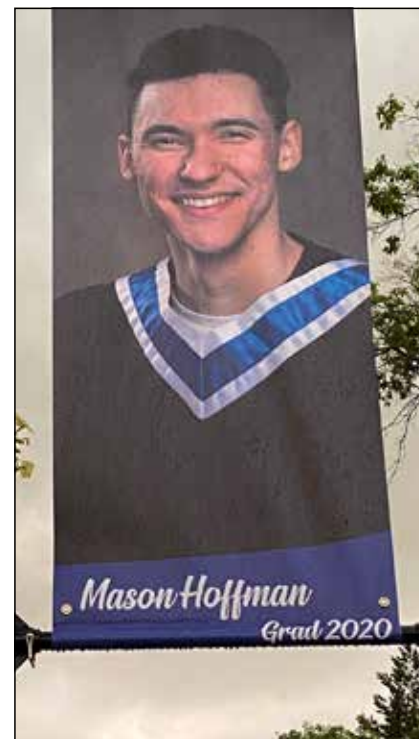
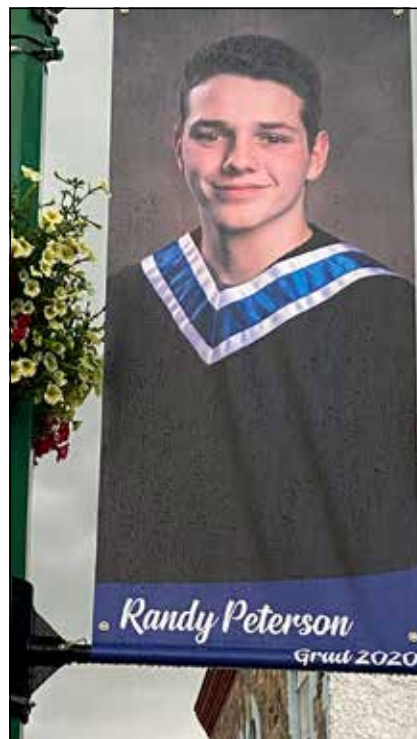


On January 26, a celebration was held for retiring organist, Diane Hampton, from St. Luke’s Presbyterian Church in Salt Springs, N.S., and the West River Pastoral Charge of the Pictou Presbytery. Along with a “Litany of Appreciation” for her more than 30 years of sharing her musical talents, Diane received gifts from congregants at a special fellowship time. Pictured is Diane with the Rev. Mary Anne Grant.



The choir at Knox Presbyterian Church in Guelph, Ont., has continued to meet online during the church building closure.

GATHERINGS



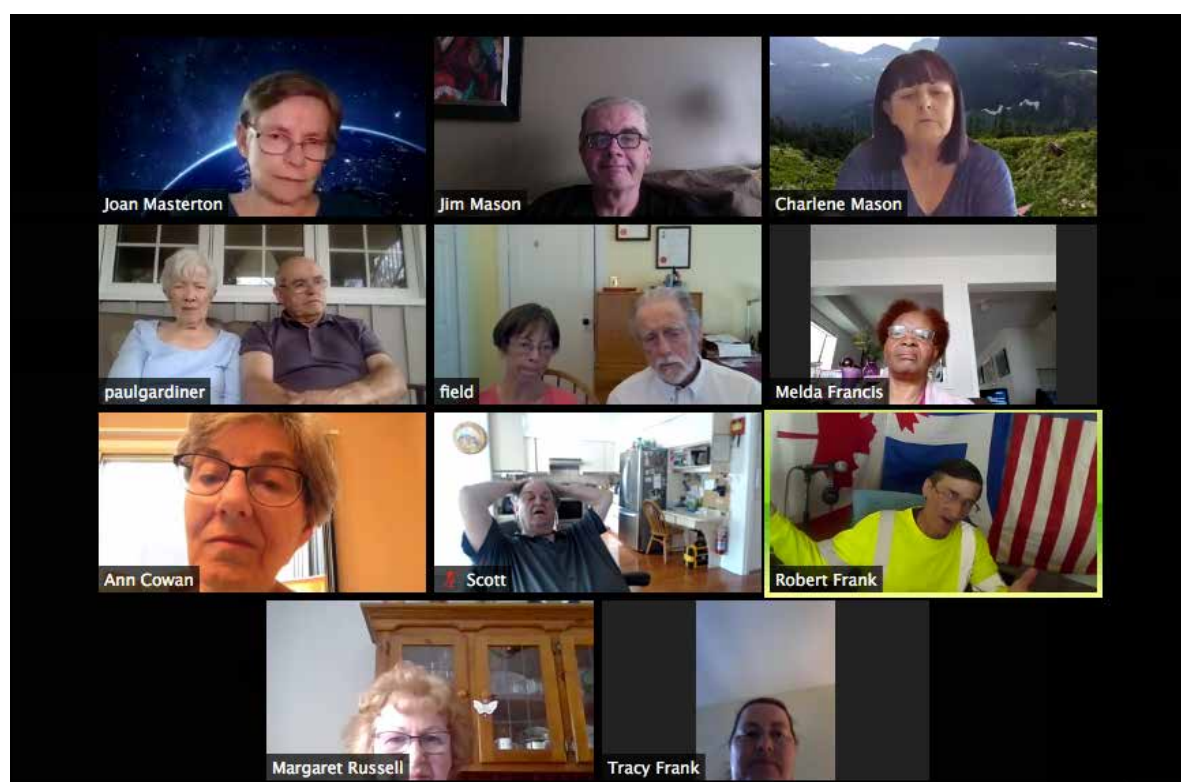
Trinity Presbyterian Church in Grenfell, Sask., and the town of Grenfell, honoured their Grade 12 graduates in unique ways. Members of the congregation made quilts for each of the graduates from Trinity PC, and the town put up each graduate's picture on a banner along Main Street. Pictured here is Randy Peterson being presented with his quilt by elder Sharon Lowenberg.



Worship at Wasaga Beach Community Presbyterian Church in Wasaga Beach, Ont., moved online. Pictured above are some "behind the scenes" glimpses at how each service is produced. Special thanks go out to Heather Doner, Ruth Currie and Dave Williams for their faithful service every week!



Place of Hope Indigenous Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man., led a berry picking excursion. The first-time congregation members have been together since the pandemic started. Place of Hope Indigenous Presbyterian Church gives special thanks to the First Presbyterian Church St. James Legacy Fund for providing the funds for transportation and the berries.



St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., recently hosted an after-church coffee hour online. It wasn't quite the same as meeting in our cozy Morris Hall, but there was plenty of laughing, love and catching up. Like many other congregations, St. James' committees have been meeting online. Worship services have been recorded weekly and uploaded to YouTube on Sundays.

GATHERINGS



First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., like so many others, has sought ways to support the local community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of the congregation sewed over 60 “scrub bags” for front-line staff at the local hospital and long-term care facilities. The congregation also made financial donations to two long-term care residences, which allowed one to purchase a set of “virtual reality” glasses for residents to use, and another to host a “Timmies Night” for residents and staff. First PC is so grateful to be able to support those who might otherwise be forgotten in these times!



For Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., Communion Sunday on June 7 was done virtually by an audio presentation, accompanied by a slideshow featuring pictures of the sanctuary with the communion table set up. Hopefully, the congregation will have returned to the church to share communion together for World Communion Sunday on October 4. Much time has been spent by some elders on the technical aspects and preparation of slideshows for Sunday worship services, which typically feature various nature scenes and congregational activities from past years. All worship services are posted on the church website. PHOTO CREDIT: ROGER POTTS.



Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., recently held their first-ever online communion service. Congregants participated from the comfort of their own homes, in their own ways.



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REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

Supporting Newcomers During COVID-19



The Centennial PC Mission Committee welcoming the family at the Calgary airport.

By Okelo Aballa, Centennial Presbyterian Church, Calgary, Alta.

We are so grateful to have received a newcomer and his family at the end of 2019. They were among the thousands of Anyuak people suffering in a refugee camp in Kenya for many years.

In 2017, our congregation, Centennial Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., and Anyuak Ministry decided to sponsor a family from a

Kenyan refugee camp. It was our first experience with sponsorship, and we did not know much about the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. So we reached out to a Presbyterian congregation that had been involved with multiple sponsorships, as well as to the PWS&D Refugee Sponsorship Coordinator at the time, Rob Shropshire, for guidance.

With help from Rob and much prayer, we embarked on our sponsorship journey. While we were ini-

tially told the whole process would take about six years, we welcomed our first refugee family to Canada within less than two years. What seemed impossible two years earlier was now a reality.

The family arrived in November 2019. It was a great moment for our congregation and for the newcomer to be reunited with his brother and friends after almost 20 years.

Their sponsorship experience was not that different from my own when my family first arrived in Canada. Because we had lived through the same situation only a few years earlier, we were able to help the family with no problem at all.

But suddenly the threat of COVID-19 arose from nowhere. This was a problem we had not expected; rather, we had thought an employment delay or something similar might occur. We were bewildered when we heard about social distancing for the first time. It has affected everything. It limited visitation, interactions and social networking with the new family.

Despite all of these challenges, the Centennial PC mission team and the entire Anyuak community in Calgary have been able to help the family settle into their new environment very



The family sponsored by Centennial PC in Calgary, Alta., on the day they arrived in Canada.

well. We have managed to follow up with appointments over the phone. We have designated two people to go grocery shopping a few times a week and to take the family to their in-person appointments.

We communicate on a regular basis by phone and online, and we are also running church activities online to build connections with the family. It has been a new way of life for all of us that we must adapt to. Now we have learned a lot about how to help a newcomer in this kind of situation

and we cannot wait to see our next family coming.

Our sincere thanks go to PWS&D for their tireless work and guidance throughout the whole sponsorship; we could not have done it without you.

Centennial Presbyterian Church first began working with PWS&D in 2018 to submit the application for the family mentioned in this article, they also submitted a sponsorship application in 2019, and will be submitting another in 2020.

NEWS

Missing Stampede but Not Missing Out



The Rev. Jake Van Pernis, Associate Minister, Engagement & Service.

By Amy Dunn Moscoso, Communications Coordinator, Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

This summer, the Calgary Stampede was cancelled for the first time in

more than 100 years due to COVID-19. This event usually leads to 10 days of delightful Calgary community spirit that includes multiple free daily Stampede breakfasts and community activities all across the city.

As a missional church, Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., has been working to embrace the Beltline, an inner city area of Calgary where the church is located. The community includes younger professionals between the ages of 25 and 35, those who identify as having no religion, those who belong to other religions, and those who have immigrated to Canada. A neighbouring school that Grace supports has students who speak more than 45 first languages. Few members of the congregation live here and Grace is working to serve this diverse community. In 2019, Grace hosted a community Stampede Breakfast and more than 800 from the Beltline attended, many meeting Grace members for the first time.

This year, Grace wanted to show up for the community during a difficult time. The Engagement & Service Committee decided to create a video to help people celebrate Stampede culture, and support kids and fami-

lies in the Beltline facing summer hunger. The Virtual Stampede Party video included a buttermilk pancake cooking lesson, a "Slap Leather" Western Line Dancing segment, a pancake flip compilation segment and challenge (#gracepancakeflip), as well as a call to action to donate to I Can for Kids—a local non-profit that Grace partnered with to distribute grocery gift cards to families in immediate need of food, including more than 30 families from the local Beltline school that Grace supports. The video included 35 people (from seven years old to 96) and seven outside organizations, including those from the I Can for Kids circle such as Calgary police, firefighters and Save-On-Foods that matched online donations. Two horses and one dog also appeared!

The video was viewed close to 300 times and was included in five media stories about Stampede spirit, community building and adaptation during COVID-19 (three national, in-



Distributing grocery gift cards and fresh produce to Calgary Beltline neighbourhood families.

cluding the *Globe and Mail*, and two local in Calgary). Close to \$2,000 was raised for I Can for Kids.

Grace members, those who took part, and many walking by the church have expressed joy and gratitude for a fun summer community opportunity!

NEWS

Moving Forward in Toney River



The evening beach service for 50–75 people, including cottagers.

By Mona MacDonald, St. David's Presbyterian Church in Toney River, Pictou County, N.S.

The congregation of St. David's Presbyterian Church in Toney River, N.S., is a relatively small fishing/farming community with an average Sunday attendance of 35–45 adults and 6–12 children.

The Rev. Christine O'Reilly from Knox Presbyterian Church in Thed-

ford, Ont., and the Rev. Peter Bush came to Pictou County and gave an informative and inspiring workshop on Reframing. When some of the ideas were presented at the annual congregational meeting, the result was like the proverbial bit of yeast in a measure of flour! A committee was struck; they organized, revised and circulated a survey to the broader community. Results were compiled, and goals and action plans were devised. The

committee morphed into the Moving Forward Action Committee and "Go forward as well as outward" became our motto.

Our initiatives, numbering 20 or more at this time, include strategies for older members, Sunday School interactions, and outreach. Our children are participating in both worship and outreach activities.

Here are some of our activities. Our Sunday School members, with

assistance from the congregation, assembled "blessing bags" with toiletries and other essentials to give to the local youth shelter; children participate in church services by gathering the offering, greeting visitors, decorating for special occasions and creating seasonal bulletin boards. Angela Cromwell, one of our talented musicians, leads the children and the congregation in a monthly "Joyful Noise" segment of our worship service.

A local doctor, Rob Bush, M.D., gave an evening presentation on men's health, with over 75 attendees. We've treated the congregation to Eggnog Sunday and Apple Cider Sunday, planned biblical-themed pumpkin carving opportunities, invited guest musicians, hosted Easter Bonnet Sunday and Cottager Sunday, and assembled welcome candles as tokens for first-time visitors. Presently, we are working on constructing a roadside billboard.

Funding was received from the Nova Scotia Health Authority to deliver a series of health- and wellness-related information sessions. Unfortunately, after the first successful session on how people can reduce their risks of dementia, the COVID-19



The congregation's "biblical-themed" pumpkin carving at St. David's Presbyterian Church in Toney River, N.S.



Assembling "Roots for Youth" blessing bags.

pandemic struck; thus we put our hand to the plough and look ahead to continuing this worthwhile initiative.

Our committee members are Elizabeth Elliott, Richie Gammon, Sheila Grant, Mona MacDonald, Karri Ann Noel, Ethel Slaunwhite and Doug White.

Thank you for the inspiration, Christine and Peter!

Brighter Days in West Vancouver

By Jean Lawrence, Communication Team, West Vancouver Presbyterian Church, B.C.

For the last two years, the Communication Team of West Vancouver Presbyterian Church, B.C., has been delighted to receive a small neighbourhood grant from the West Vancouver Community Foundation to rent a bouncy castle for our Parking Lot Party, where we reach out to the local neighbourhood. This year, COVID-19 hit and we had to say goodbye to the Parking Lot Party. Then the Responsive Neighbourhood Grant was offered.

We thought of all the lonely seniors in our neighbourhood, especially those in independent and/or assisted living, and wondered what the Communication Team Sub-Committee of West Vancouver Presbyterian Church could do to bring a little joy to these isolated people.

I came up with the idea of flowers or a plant that could be delivered, so I contacted long-time family friend

Kyla Beyer, owner of Limelight Floral Design in Dundarave, who immediately said yes to selling us 500 Kalanchoe plants at her wholesale price. To quote Kyla, the plants are "cheap, cheerful and long lasting."

Then I contacted Andrew Makodi, Director of Recreation at Hollyburn House Retirement Residence to ask if their residents would like to receive a little plant. He was so appreciative, acknowledging what a great idea it was, especially as some of the plants could later be planted in the Hollyburn House garden.

A delivery date of May 22 was set. We put a little note in each plant. Joanne Wallis came up with the slogan "To brighten your day..." Each card had the slogan, a small West Vancouver address label at the bottom of the card, and stickers in the middle. Some of them had bright drawings, thanks to my 14-year-old grandson.

Joanne and I donned our masks and headed to Limelight Floral Design in the morning of May 22; Kyla



Jean Lawrence (left) and fellow Communications Team Sub-Committee member, Joanne Wallis.

had the boxes of the beautiful bright Kalanchoe plants on the sidewalk, ready for loading into our two vehicles. We drove to Hollyburn House, where Andrew, wearing his mask, emerged with a cart on which to place the plants once we put a card in each one.

We did take off our masks for the "photo op" and were so happy to "brighten the day" of so many Hollyburn House residents. Kyla was thanked with a bottle of champagne (from my wine rack) and a Thank You card.

Three cheers to the West Vancouver Community Foundation for "brightening the lives" of so many in our community.



Andrew Makodi, recreation director of Hollyburn House.

NEWS

Brentwood's Missional Musicking



Holy Week Jazz Evensong service.

*By the Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser,
Brentwood Presbyterian Church in
Burnaby, B.C.*

Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Burnaby, B.C., is a small, simple space. The sanctuary seats 100, and there are a couple of small offices upstairs, along with a large, open space downstairs that has a kitchen, washrooms and a bit of room for storage. Over the past 10 years, we've invested \$100,000 in renovations and equipment to make this space more welcoming to musicians in Greater Vancouver, especially the jazz community who are our primary missional neighbours.

Prior to the introduction of physical distancing measures, missional musicking took place almost every day

in the sanctuary—lessons, practicing, concerts, workshops and worship services. Our Sunday morning services always offered the opportunity for fellowship with a potluck lunch afterwards. Every Wednesday evening, we offered Jazz Evensong with a performance by a different jazz group each week.

The congregation has established a big band as a parallel ministry—The Brentwood Jazz All-Stars—led by our associate music director, Ben MacRae. The band has commissioned a suite of songs from Mister Rogers' Neighbourhood arranged by Jill Townsend, as well as a big band version of "The Prodigal Son Suite" by our music director, Dan Reynolds.

At Brentwood, we see all these compassionate connections with mu-



Some of the people who work with the Spirit to make the missioning at Brentwood Presbyterian Church happen.

sicians and their supporters as a way in which we can be ambassadors of the Trinity's forgiving and reconciling love (2 Corinthians 5:19–20).

The number of people who work with the Spirit to make this missioning happen is small, in some ways, but all are active participants in nourishing souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ through worship, learning, fellowship and service. That's the mission we composed in 2009 and it still guides us as we identify new strategic priorities for our missioning each year.

During this time of pandemic, we've taken our missional musicking online. We've made Jazz Evensong available, using clips from previous services and concerts. Our Sunday morning worship services are live-streamed. Dan and Ben do the music that is embedded into our PowerPoint slides, which recently included an original composition of Ben's based on Psalm 23.

Interesting opportunities and successes have emerged from distancing, such as a new Saturday morning prayer group. Our online Jazz Evensongs have been getting anywhere

The word "musicking" was coined by musicologist Christopher Small, and refers to all the various relationships involved in generating social meaning through music.

from 175 to 1,100 views. We also had the opportunity to provide some songs for a group of four churches in the Niagara Peninsula who are working together on summer services for their neighbourhoods. So, lots of seeds are being scattered!

As with most small congregations, Brentwood's main gatherings are for worship, so taking these services online has been a major shift. We wanted the online service for Sunday morning worship to be live and interactive in order to sustain a sense of community during the shutdown. Grants from our presbytery and the PCC have enabled us to strengthen our communications platforms, thereby extending our circles of inspiration and influence.

The pastoral contact networks within the congregation have also

deepened, with people volunteering to keep in touch with members of our church and jazz community. Several have had their revenue streams disrupted, especially musicians who rely on the gig economy.

We have continued to pay the musicians whose Jazz Evensong performances were cancelled as a result of the pandemic. We have also applied for funding from the Canada Summer Jobs program to hire three of our musicians and to help us work toward promoting the Brentwood sanctuary as a community arts centre. All in all, the disruptions to our regular patterns are creating space to imagine new possibilities for nourishing souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ through worship, learning, fellowship and service.

Brentwood Presbyterian Church received an innovation grant from the PCC to help them start a podcast for people who are curious about church.



Presbyterians
Sharing

The Strange Case of the Almost-Missing Windows

*By Laura Van Loon, pastoral care
nurse, St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church in Saskatoon, Sask.*

These two windows were dedicated on May 27, 1984, in the altar area of Parkview Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon, Sask. Ron Baily, and his brother, Don, who is an elder at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon, placed them in memory of two long-term elders of Parkview: their father, William Ronald Bailey,

and his best friend, the Rev. Richard J. Nixon.

The dove of peace represents their father, who was a CNR locomotive engineer for 40 years, because he was a man of unruffled contentment, a man of peace. The Celtic Cross represents the lifelong preaching and teaching service by the Rev. Nixon, Principal of the Saskatoon Bible College in its early days.

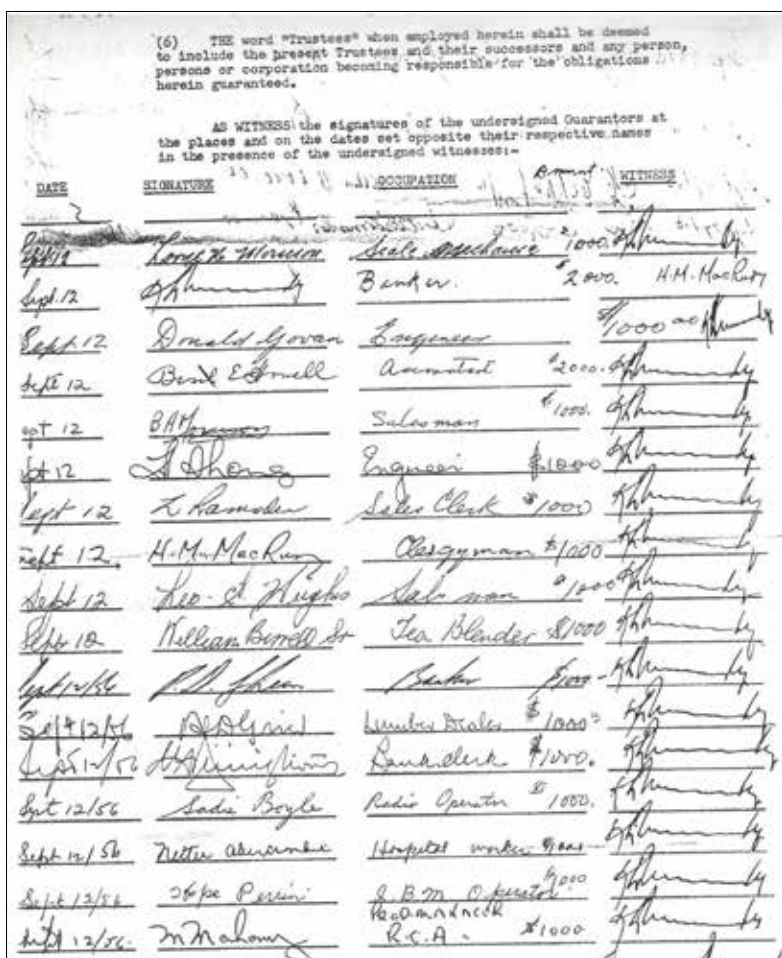
When Parkview Presbyterian Church closed in 2008, two Parkview ladies,

Joan Sande and Elma Horseman, saved the panels and windows, and they were placed in storage until this year, when the Session of St. Andrew's agreed to install the windows on their walls near the sanctuary. Special lighting and mounting have made them an extraordinary addition to the front of our church. The blessed recovery of these beautiful memorial windows is a symbol recognizing the heritage of Parkview Presbyterian Church.



NEWS

When 156-Year-Old Traditions Go Online



An artifact shared in the historic snapshot included a photo of the Rev. Hector MacRury, who led the church building expansion project in the 1950s, and a scan of the loan document with the signatures.

By the Rev. Joel Coppieters, Côte des Neiges Presbyterian Church in Montreal, Que.

To say that the people of Côte des Neiges love celebrations is an understatement. We are Presbyterians after all, and the congregation of Côte des Neiges Presbyterian Church in Montreal, Que., includes over 20 different cultures that each have their own red-letter days on the calendar and like to bring their own flair (and their own secret recipes!) to the party. In fact, after eight years as the minister, most of the congregation can now complete my favourite tagline: "There's only one thing better than a Sunday with a cake...a Sunday with two cakes!"

We're not sure how far back it started, but our annual anniversary weekend at the end of May has become a can't-miss tradition. We

don't always go no-holds-barred like we did for our 150th, but most years, we can find something to inaugurate, dedicate, repaint, refurbish or reopen. Sometimes it's commissioning new pew Bibles, inducting new elders or cutting the ribbon on the new side lawn... (Shhh, not yet!)

The weekend usually features a special, diet-throttling feast and musical evening on Saturday, and celebratory services joined by a guest speaker on Sunday. But this year, our guest speaker couldn't cross the border, we couldn't serve dinner (of any calorie count!) and we couldn't get together as a congregation. The thought of cancelling crossed our minds for about 30 seconds, and then we came back with a vengeance.

Our annual anniversary shindig is usually held on the second to last Sunday in May to honour the congregation's first service on May 22,

1864. When we noticed that this year the last Sunday in May happened to be Pentecost Sunday, we knew we had one more reason to celebrate! So instead of cancelling our anniversary weekend, we took it online and stretched it to a whole Anniversary Week.

The pre-recorded service that was prepared for May 24 noted that we have been a congregation for 156 years, worshipping at this same spot. We invited people to check out our Facebook and web pages each morning during Anniversary Week for an historic snapshot about our history, similar to the Heritage Minutes produced by Historica Canada. The pastor's anniversary letter, which was coordinated to arrive just a few days before, also invited people to join the online celebration.

Several months ago, one of the tradesmen who was in the building as part of our renovation program was able to open a locked drawer in our fireproof safe that we hadn't been able to get into for years. When we saw the treasure of historical documents within—archives, handwritten minutes, letters and pictures—we started dreaming about how we might use them to build excitement and pride in our history. We actually found the original tally sheet from the congregation's church union vote in 1925 with the handwritten counts and the signatures of the invigilators. These newly rediscovered documents were the basis for our historic snapshots. We carefully combed through the documents and combined pictures and document scans so that each morning of the anniversary week featured another surprising twist in the narrative. I think my favourite was the Thursday morning snapshot about how the addition of

the Fellowship Hall was made possible.

By the early 1950s, two successive outreach-minded ministers—with the assistance of immigration patterns—had managed to pack out the church. A plan was developed to almost double the seating capacity of the sanctuary and add a basement with a fellowship hall, kitchen and other utilitarian spaces, but the final cost estimate of \$75,000 seemed out of reach to the blue-collar congregation that included many struggling new immigrants. They agreed on devoting \$37,000, the first half of the expansion project costs, to the basement fellowship hall, kitchen and Sunday School spaces.

With only \$8,000 raised in donations, a loan was necessary, but the man who chaired the board of managers was told by the bank manager, "You guys are a white English Protestant Church in an immigrant neighbourhood, you'll be closed in five years. There's no way we're giving you a loan or a mortgage." (That was 64 years ago!)

A trust company eventually agreed but, unsure about the church's future, they required an unusual concession. On signing day, Sept. 12, 1956, over 30 men from the congregation showed up at the trust company, and each in turn provided a personal guarantee for a portion of the loan. The pictures we shared online included the document with the signatures, names and occupations of those who had stepped up to be counted. Judging by the occupations listed on the loan agreement, some were co-signing for almost a year's worth of income.

Each morning during Anniversary Week, members of the congregation were inspired with stories and

pieces of our history. At previous anniversary dinners, I had occasionally shared a few historical anecdotes and showed a copy of a document or an old picture on the projector, but with everyone home at their computers this year, it was an ideal time to include collections of pictures and scans of documents. It was almost like sitting in your living room looking through a family photo album.

On Saturday evening, we posted a video titled, "A Few of My Favourite Places," a reflective historical tour of several key spots in the building. We called it a documentary, but it was designed to be as inspirational as it was informative. It required many hours of planning, filming and editing, but the result is a lasting piece of memorabilia more powerful than any plate, mug or calendar we've produced for our anniversaries in the past. And it's still up on our website as visitors find us online at montrealpresbyterian.com.

The week culminated with the Anniversary Service on Pentecost Sunday that included a couple of nods to our history, like actually reading the Psalm of the day from the old King James Pulpit Bible that is proudly displayed, but seldom used.

In response to changing circumstances, it can be too easy to give up on important traditions, but when technology is well used, it can help us to affirm the things about our past that we still treasure. How fitting that part of the funds raised through our Anniversary Offering this year—which were given by mail, online and through direct deposit—will help us to expand our technical skills and equipment to minister even more widely than we have in the past to the community we have faithfully served for over 156 years. (I wonder whether that bank manager is still around...)

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NEWS

Gardening with Heart in Tweed



By the Rev. Stephen Brown, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Tweed, Ont.

At St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Tweed, Ont., we have a garden project. Ours is a teaching garden focusing on combatting food insecurity and loneliness, particularly among seniors within our community. It has been a fulfilling project—but the journey through the pandemic has been particularly astounding, and I'd like to share it.

This was an unlikely project in the first place. Rural people tend to have space—community gardens aren't the necessity they are in urban areas. We almost dismissed the idea. But we also realized that it's difficult for newcomers to break into social circles that go back generations. They also may not know what to do with their land. And while we don't have many resources to offer, we have half of the horticulture society in the pews on Sunday. Clearly, a garden is what God was calling us to plant. In the end, what we realized we had to offer was community and education—things Tweed needed. The idea of the teaching garden is to build community through enabling anyone in Tweed to join in and learn about sustainable healthy home food production. It's been a great success and constantly spins off other creative ministries. We almost dismissed it—but the Spirit had other plans.

Then the pandemic came. At first, it looked like community gardens would not be allowed. On top of that, in a terrible twist of misfortune, our leader and primary teacher broke both her legs (she's recovering well!). So, our expert was only available to guide us over the phone, and only a single household group

at a time was allowed into the garden. This was certainly not what we had planned.

But here's the amazing part. While things haven't exactly gone smoothly—miscommunications and mistakes have been plentiful—we have been able to provide more educational opportunities and community building than we likely would have done under normal circumstances. With our expert on the other side of the phone and no hands-on assistance allowed, people have had to learn by doing. Moreover, they've had to learn how to coordinate and work with each other in ways they otherwise wouldn't have. We've had to learn to be more graceful and accepting of the unexpected. Many volunteers from last year have had to stay home while others were looking for something to get them out of the house, so the community has expanded. Frankly, the upheaval would normally result in a combination of irritating and terrifying, but the pandemic has put it into perspective, making the new way okay, and people are willing to push themselves a little further. And while education and community are the priorities, the garden is still producing very well.

I want to share another success.

This is the third year we have planted a heart garden, symbolizing our support of residential school survivors. Usually it has flowers in it, but we were only allowed vegetables. So we planted using an Indigenous method called "three sisters." Corn stalks are the support for beans, and squash protects the roots of both. We have interspersed these with plywood hearts that were sent home for households to draw reconciliation-themed art on. These hearts were organized and distributed by a terrific woman in our congregation who has become a great teacher for us on the topic of inclusion. She spearheaded this project that would not have happened otherwise.

I share this story because during the pandemic, the danger is to focus on what we've lost or can't do. We had plans for our garden—and they were good ones. But we've been led in a different direction and it turns out to be a good one in ways we couldn't have imagined. We keep hearing that the post-pandemic world will not return to the way it was. I ask: Is that a bad thing?

At the time of writing this article, the world has lost over six hundred and fifty thousand people to the coronavirus with over 16 million cases globally. The existence of rampant



racism has come front and centre. Shortcomings in our politics, social programs, health care and long-term care have been exposed, despite being warned for years that we're not equipped for a global pandemic. These important issues are not new—the pandemic has merely held up a mirror. As confessional, resurrection people, we should be embracing the future. We should be comfortable with recognizing our humanity, and try to tap into the divine to be led to a healthier place that we would not come to on our own. Even when we have great plans—the Holy Spirit may have even better ones we could never anticipate.

St. David's Online "Treasures Auction"

By the Rev. Drew Jacques, St. David's Presbyterian Church in Campbellville, Ont.

Historically, a key component of fundraising efforts at St. David's Presbyterian Church in Campbellville, Ont., was community breakfasts. At one time they generated a significant stream of revenue.

At our last Breakfast and Bazaar, six people spent nearly 30 hours getting the event together. It was quite nice; however, the breakfast side of the event brought in less than \$200.

Then came the *disruption* and with it the realization that it will be a long time before St. David's has a community breakfast again.

Of course, Murphy's Law came into play and we discovered a golf-ball-sized hole in the steeple where water was leaking in. Where did the

hole come from? Windstorm? Lightning? Ice falling off a Boeing 767? We didn't know. It really didn't matter how it got there; what mattered was that it needed to be repaired.

At this year's annual general meeting, the congregation voted for a fundraising effort to be initiated before any repairs were done on the building. This decision was made to reduce, or limit, the funds taken from the rapidly diminishing Bequeath Fund for repairs. I suggested we do an online "Treasures Auction" with a company called Maxsold.

The idea of "treasures" comes from Matthew 6:19–21, and the auction was inspired by the awareness that we all have a lot of stuff that we need to unload, or leave to our kids to sort through. The future is about getting light. In my 30-odd years of conducting funerals, I've never seen a hearse

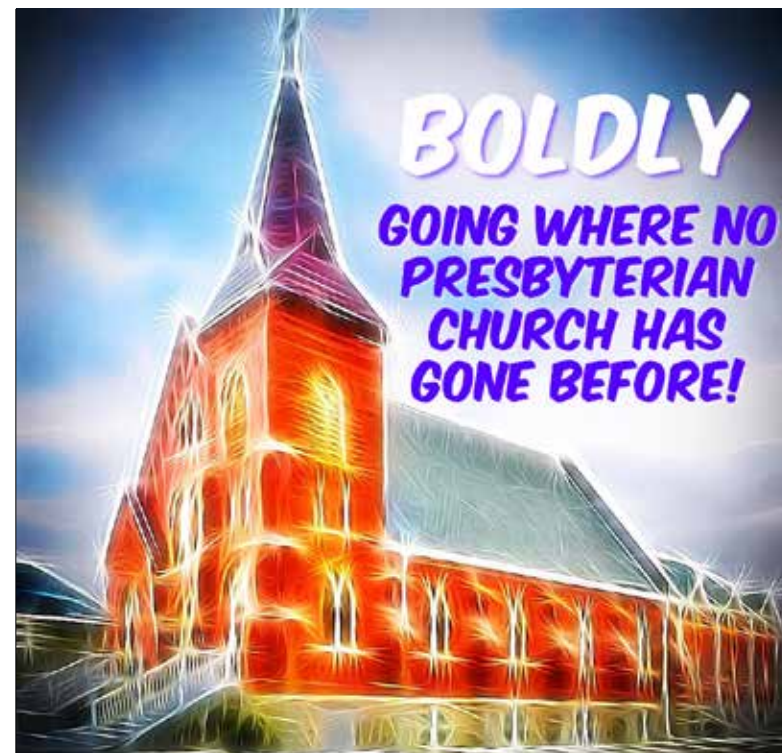
pulling a U-Haul into a cemetery.

A treasure is something of value, something that collectors might be interested in (i.e., original art, mid-century modern décor, collectible glassware, jewelry, CD/DVDs). The call was put out to the congregation to donate a treasure. Many did, and additional donations came out of the blue from the community as well.

The auction ran from June 22 until June 30. Altogether, we raised over \$2,800 (or 14 community breakfasts). We are confident that the cost to repair the hole in the steeple will be less than the amount raised.

We are encouraged by the success of our first online auction, and we plan to do it again in the fall.

Special thanks to Corinne, Noreen, Norma, Lisa and Jane for getting it together, and to all who volunteered on pick-up day.



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NEWS

Summer in Salmon Arm



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Salmon Arm, B.C.

By the Rev. Ena van Zoeren, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Salmon Arm, B.C.

In June, the Board and Session of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Salmon Arm, B.C., gathered to figure out and practice new seating and ushering protocols for worshipping in person. On Sunday, June 14, we were pleased to be able to gather once again in the building and worship with one another. We do so with gratitude and with joy, knowing that as people created to be together in

a body, we have missed that "in person" connection. Yet we also celebrate that the life of this congregation has been strong during the time the building was closed. The innovation and vision of our members has given us so many ways to connect while in isolation.

We started online worship by providing a printed copy of the full service. The first innovation to our online worship offering was from the web administrator who included links to music videos of the hymns on YouTube so that we could all sing in con-



A virtual paper car rally for Father's Day.

nection with other voices. It made our worship so much richer. Then we started hearing about how people were utilizing the service, reading the different sections in rotation, sharing the scripture readings and adding their own intercessions to the Prayers of the People just as if they were at worship. The participation of the whole people of God was greater through our website than in person. Something to celebrate. Those prayer concerns continued to be met by the Monday Prayer group who shared prayer requests throughout the day via email.

The connectedness of the congregation was maintained by regular phone calls to all the members by the elders and minister, as well as a few others who reached out to those they knew. One person sent a weekly chat-ty letter to everyone, which included something to tease our brains for the week to come. That generated a bit of chatter for sure. These letters continue for those who feel unable to join us in

person for worship, as do all of the web worship options.

One weekly letter featured an activity to make a paper model car and provided a pattern to colour, cut out, put together and photograph for a virtual car rally on Father's Day. The photos of the assembled paper model cars were put up on our Facebook page. In addition, the Facebook page was updated weekly with a photo of the sanctuary as the pulpit fall was changed each week. The photo was posted along with a link to the service on the website and to videos of the sermon once we started producing those.

The annual spring cleanup was able to take place with the help and participation of nine people who all made sure that they were physically distanced as much as possible while they worked. They got the church in tip-top shape by clearing bushes and repainting the church doors. The HOPE (Helping Other People Eat) Garden, a long-time project of the con-



gregation, spearheaded by members Maye and Don Can to feed the hungry, was replanted and tended to by Maye and Don along with a few other members of the congregation who occasionally volunteer. The harvest has since begun, and the Second Harvest Food Bank is grateful to receive the produce.

As soon as the church's thrift store reopened, those among us who volunteer there were signing up for shifts, eager to get out and do something for others again.

Although St. Andrew's is a small congregation, we are mighty and filled with willing servants. We are so grateful to God for the dedicated people who have demonstrated their clear love of the church community, for one another and for the communities in which we live. We are indeed blessed to have one another, and we're incredibly grateful to celebrate all that we have done as we meet again in person.

Certainly, God has been good.

Pandemic Support for Developing Countries



Clean water for hand washing in Nigeria. PHOTO CREDIT: ACT ALLIANCE.

By Anne Phillips, St. Andrew's – Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont.

The congregation of St. Andrew's – Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont., made the unanimous decision to donate \$100,000 to Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) in order to come to the aid of developing countries during the COVID-19 crisis. The funds for this large donation were bequeathed by a long-time congregation member and will go to people in need in Palestine, South Sudan, Somalia and Bangladesh.

The congregation understood that the effects of the pandemic could potentially be devastating in developing countries where thousands of people are also dealing with other critical issues, such as malnutrition, food insecurity, extreme poverty and natural disasters.

In addition to this donation, the



PWS&D supports programs like this one in Afghanistan. PHOTO CREDIT: ACT ALLIANCE.

church has made a donation to the Evangel Hall Mission in Toronto for its food program, and has a fund available to help in Uxbridge.

The congregation is also prepared

to make funds available when the need arises closer to home, when government programs end and housing and food instability become issues in the community.

NEWS

The Gathering Place



By Jane Thomas, *The Gathering Place*
 Presbyterian Church in Port Colborne,
 Ont.

Sometimes it seems as though the Bible is all about journeys: physical journeys of nomads, shiploads of animals, whale-loads of prophets, waves of itinerant disciples; spiritual journeys of shepherds, fisher-folk, housewives, aristocrats. It also seems as though few of those trips were undertaken willingly at the outset—well, except for the Prodigal Son, and that could have turned out worse than it did.

The Presbyterians of The Gathering Place Presbyterian Church in Port Colborne, Ont., are also on a journey. Our story is that of many small communities. We flourished when Port Colborne was a heavy-industry town, when church-going was a given, when local people depended on local commerce. Our church building, which resided in the oldest part of the town centre since 1909 (when we were known as First Presbyterian Church), was traditional and pretty, with extensions added over the years for the hall, social centre and chil-

dren's programs.

But from the 1970s onwards, heavy industry waned and membership aged. By the 2000s, the congregation had reduced to fewer than 100 and we faced a future of great change. On top of this, the church building required costly maintenance and repair. Re-roofing the building alone could break the bank, and that was before we tackled the flooded basement and the asbestos. During this time, pastoral duties were being undertaken by an interim minister, the Rev. Larry Beverly.

Our demise was widely predicted, but the congregation chose otherwise. Could it be, "for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7)?

In 2012, we filled the pastoral vacancy with a young minister, freshly arrived from Hungary—the Rev. Adam Bartha—who was committed to sticking with us on our quest.

Our choices seemed to be: Option 1, struggle until we disappeared. Option 2, close and disperse immediately. Option 3, seek a development

partnership to share the campus with another venture. Option 4, continue elsewhere on a smaller scale.

We didn't go at it slapdash. We held congregational meetings with guest facilitators to assess what we really wanted. We winnowed through the options in working groups and congregational questionnaires, decisively dismissing Options 1 and 2, prioritizing Option 3, and keeping Option 4 on the back burner.

In grand Presbyterian tradition, a committee was formed.

First, working to Option 3, we consulted with other churches that had gone a similar route. This led to writing our "Request for Proposals" for distribution to potential partners with a view to a campus, including worship space and apartments. We also wrote documentation to present our ideas to the presbytery knowing that—whatever materialized—we would need support in transitioning, both in terms of a new building and congregational "culture." The response to our idea for a church/developer partnership only attracted one enquiry. Among other problems, the property proved to be too small to



provide a financially sustainable mix.

Still, we were determined to remain a church family, so we turned our efforts to Option 4. Congregants toured empty spaces and explored shared facilities with other denominations. We settled on a city centre space that was formerly a dollar store. With this decision, we put our home of 149 years on the market and sold it in short order.

The dollar store was revamped and made into a multi-function space with an office, kitchenette, washrooms, a storeroom and basement Sunday School room.

We held our first service at The Gathering Place in February 2018. Did the entire congregation make the move? No, some felt the wrench of relocation too great and left—although some have returned. Is the new space enough? Again, no, we miss the catering facilities and the fundraising opportunities these facilities provided as we put on some great dinners, cooking classes, teas, etc. Sharing one space also means we're sometimes falling over each other.

And then there's the "but." And it's a big "but."

Being on the main thoroughfare, we are discovering that we can offer outreach to new people through kids' activities, environmental events, carol singalongs, and generally open doors. We are making new friends among the dog walkers, the merchants and people simply passing by on the street. And though there's less room, we have done some crackin' good potlucks, soup Sundays and funeral receptions in our current space.

The pandemic has shot us into the techno-world. In a matter of weeks, we have gone from traditional services to online services on our own YouTube channel (The Gathering Place Port Colborne) and online Bible study/coffee morning meet ups. And guess what? Our viewing figures are actually higher than our own membership numbers were, our givings are still on track and congregants are dreaming up new ideas for a new normal.

It's a long—and bumpy—road, asking for great change and commitment. It's a work in progress, but it's God's work, and we're learning as we go.

New Program Coordinator for Sexuality & Inclusion



Carragh Erhardt, Program Coordinator,
 Sexuality and Inclusion

The Assembly Council allocated funds in July to support a staff position to help the church fulfill the decisions and statements it has made about sexuality, orientation and gender. The Life and Mission Agency is pleased to announce that Carragh Erhardt has been hired on a fixed term contract to assist with this work as the Program Coordinator for Sexuality and Inclusion. In this position, Carragh will be responsible for coordinating and

ensuring the overall effectiveness of a program that helps the PCC welcome one another as Christ has welcomed each of us.

Carragh will work with Sessions, presbyteries, committees and agencies of the PCC to help bring to life the decisions, letters and statements related to sexuality, orientation, gender identity and faith that the church has made and will yet make.

Over the past few years, Carragh

has served the church through her work with Justice Ministries, with a focus on supporting healing and reconciliation initiatives and Indigenous rights advocacy. Carragh is a relationship builder and is experienced in facilitating creative, engaging, positive and meaningful conversations on challenging issues as they relate to the church.

Carragh shared: "As a Christian who is bisexual, my faith journey has been deeply interwoven with

acknowledging and embracing my sexuality. I'm grateful for the faith leaders, both within and outside of the LGBTQI+ community, who have encouraged me. I look forward to being a resource and support for others as Presbyterian ministries seek to become more inclusive communities."

To learn more about this work or to contact Carragh, visit presbyterian.ca/sexuality.



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



NEWS

Young People with a World View



*By Chris MacDonald, Clerk of Session,
First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, N.S.*

Since the spring of 1998, the Sunday School of First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, N.S., has spearheaded

many mission projects to support the work of PWS&D and special appeals all over the world, as well as mission projects within Canada and local projects here in Pictou. The total raised by the Sunday School for these projects over the years is a whopping \$29,461.99!

To recognize this achievement, balloons are proudly displayed on the walls of First Church Hall. The range of projects that the Sunday School supports are far reaching and broad in their scope and impact. They include global support for earthquake relief; famine relief; schools and education; agriculture projects; local Christmas families; Canadian missions, such as Flora House (Winnipeg Inner City Missions) in Winnipeg and Evangel Hall Mission in Toronto;

and most recently, the Syrian refugee effort.

The Sunday School organizes a variety of events each year, which are well supported by the congregation, including an annual Bike-A-Thon, Silent Bottle drives, and soup and dessert luncheons after church.

A special night is "Mission Madness," when the young people gather for a fun night of games. They often invite many of their school friends to join in. The adults also enjoy the fun of the night!

These events and projects do not happen without the dedication and enthusiasm of an amazing and creative Sunday School staff, supported by a willing and generous congregation.

Our young people have a very wide worldly view of the work of the



church and are learning first-hand, from their First Church exposure, the message of openness and tolerance that is the foundation of the teachings of Christ in our modern world.



Keeping in Touch in Lucknow



One of the activities for the Youth Group's online "COVID Photo Scavenger Hunt."

By Dayle Taylor, Lucknow Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, Ont.

The congregation of Lucknow Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, Ont., has been keeping in touch through a number of avenues while we have been unable to meet face-to-face due to the pandemic. Our minister, the Rev. Paul Sakasov, provides an online service with a great message each week along with links to suggested hymns on YouTube. He also posts short blog updates on what the Session is up to and the plans for the future to keep everyone in the loop.

A newsletter was emailed to all members in June, and hard copies were made available and delivered to those who don't have email. This is a new venture that shares lots of information on what is happening with the congregation. Included in the June newsletter were articles from various groups and members of the church.

The Messy Church team continues to put together "At Home" activity kits each month and deliver them to the door or mailbox of each family. The Women's Missionary Society held an outdoor meeting with a "bring your own picnic lunch" on June 30. At the meeting, they practiced social distancing, mask wearing and hand-washing. It was a good opportunity

for members to help one another adapt to this new way of being part of the church. One member, who works at the local library, recommended a couple of books she thought people might enjoy. Our organist offered suggestions for music to listen to, that provoked some thought. She said that she keeps going back to "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" when thinking of God's constant love and guidance. At this time, verse 3 speaks to us the most.

Our Youth Group has continued to meet online to participate in activities, devotions and discussions. In April, one of our members put together a YouTube video on how to make scones, and the youth made them before meeting. They were then able to sample their own baking and share the results with each other during the meeting. An international student who had come to Youth Group while on an exchange in Lucknow was also able to join the meeting virtually from her home in Switzerland. A photo scavenger hunt was part of the May meeting and, in June, there was a discussion about racial equality.

Everyone at Lucknow Presbyterian Church is definitely going the extra mile to keep connected during these unusual times.



Seedlings that grew from seeds included in the Messy Church "At Home" activity kit for April.



NEWS

Tackling Hunger in New Westminster



By Laurie McKay-Deacon and Deborah Deacon, St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church in New Westminster, B.C.

St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church has been in the west end of New Westminster, B.C., since 1910. In 2019, the Rev. Laurie McKay-Deacon started a summer produce program with the support of community partners using reclaimed food. St. Aidan's PC then worked with the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society (NWHCS) and Fraser Health to establish a new Saturday food program in the spring of 2020.

Many programs develop without consulting the people they intend to help. However, this program was informed by the voices of those with lived experience in food insecurity and included a volunteer orientation to address stereotypes, educate volunteers on the real face of hunger and reduce stigma. In light of COVID-19 and the fear of accessing food programming, we also put strict COVID-19 protocols in place and

made drive-up and delivery options available.

Why are we providing food at this time? COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on our economy, and on people's lives. Many are out of work, there is fear and anxiety, and some may not feel safe or may feel ashamed seeking help for the first time. We are not simply a food bank program providing handouts. We are easing the pressure on household dollars and feeding hope and compassion for our neighbours. In doing so, we are investing into the health and security of our community and becoming a more compassionate society. Our volunteers have been generous with their time and energy, treating everyone who comes with dignity and understanding. Businesses have partnered to support us. We are the recipients of compassion and generosity, and this allows us to do the work of food hamper distribution with the same spirit.

The program, now referred to as the Don't Go Hungry Food Program,

has expanded to include four sites: the west end of New Westminster (St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church), the east end (Knox Presbyterian Church), Queensborough (Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church) and south Burnaby (Gordon Presbyterian Church). We are currently considering expanding to the community of uptown New Westminster (First Presbyterian Church) through a community kitchen or canning program. Five congregations in New Westminster and Burnaby have held collaboration meetings for the past 2.5 years to consider where God is calling us as aging congregations with smaller numbers and aging buildings. These conversations have set the groundwork for this program to happen so quickly, as we know each other and now worship online together. Not all congregations are equally engaged, but all have a heart for the Lord's work in our neighbourhood. While we are still sorting out the future, collaborating in this ministry of feeding our neighbour with food, compassion

and hope has brought us even closer to each other and to those who give and receive, now known by name.

In early June, we received an email from someone who had heard of our new program and wondered how she could help. I noticed she was writing from a construction company and asked whether they might provide me with insulation as the manse's basement was just studded walls and this was where the food was to be stored. That same week, a project manager stopped by—I thought—to measure the walls and assess how much insulation I needed. It is now July (less than one month from her first email) and the entire entryway and recreation room have been transformed into a food store and reception area for food. We have new flooring, widened doorways, drywall and paint, pot lights, counters, two sinks, shelving from Sobey's installed in the entire rec room, and a new fridge and stand-up freezer provided as a donation from Align Construction. How can this generosity and compassion to the work of feeding our neighbour NOT be God-touched?! Do you feel the surprised giggle welling up that is God's laughter?

Within a week of our opening on May 17, the City of New Westminster applied for a grant on our behalf for \$32,500 to purchase food for people during COVID-19 restrictions. We received that financial support within a week. We are also able to deliver food to those who are in quarantine, or are fearful of venturing out, with non-perishables, produce, dairy, eggs, meat, bread and deli items. We are thankful that on July 8, we received another \$50,000 from United Way Lower Mainland to help create a network that is sustainable beyond the end of our initial funding. We are currently hiring a part-time coordinator to help expand the work of the



PHOTO CREDITS: JUSTIN THURN.

Don't Go Hungry Food Program.

Nine weeks since our opening, we are now feeding over 80 households (over 200 people) every week. Our intention is to be more than an emergency relief food hub but a sustainable community resource through building relationships.

We have more than 75 new community volunteers, are now a partner with the cities of New Westminster and Burnaby, sports clubs, farms, business partners and the congregations of five Presbyterian churches who supply volunteers, space, plastic bags and egg cartons!

We are blessed indeed, so that we may share blessing, hope and compassion with others.

Celebrating 40 Years of Innovative and Inclusive Ministry

By Nancy Matthews, Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, Ont.

After more than 40 years of ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, including 31 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, Ont., the Revs. Brooke and Linda Ashfield are retiring. Their many contributions have brought innovative and inclusive worship, programming and outreach

to congregations, communities and beyond.

Linda Sugrue and Brooke Ashfield both grew up in Ottawa, Ont., attending Knox Presbyterian Church. Following university, they began seminary together at Knox College, and were soon married. When they received their Masters of Divinity in 1979, the media noted that they were Canada's first married cou-

ple to become ordained together as Presbyterian ministers. Brooke began as assistant minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Owen Sound, as well as at Huron Feathers Presbyterian Centre in Sauble Beach, while Linda led a two-point charge at Chatsworth and Dornoch. Before leaving that role, she mentioned during the children's story time that a male minister would be replacing her,

prompting a little girl to exclaim, "Can boys be ministers, too?!"

Indeed, Linda was at the forefront of women in ministry in the PCC. On the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women, she spoke at Knox College about the struggles, challenges and prejudice that she and many others encountered during and after seminary.

Brooke and Linda began their team



Ashfield Graduation, Knox College in Toronto, May 1979.

NEWS



Brooke and Linda in the church sanctuary, December 2019.

Continued from page 36

ministry at Gateway Community Church in Toronto's Flemingdon Park where they served until 1989, when they were called to Knox Waterloo, commencing decades of caring, compassionate and fun ministry!

In Waterloo, they added a third child, Bethany, to their young family that already included Laura and Emily. All three grew up at Knox, participating in its many programs, including LOGOS. Brooke and Linda were instrumental in bringing this mid-week, relationship-centred ministry to Knox, beginning 27 years of

programming for children and youth that teaches by example that "everyone is a child of God."

The Ashfields instituted the Longest Night service for those who find the holiday season to be a difficult time, as well as four separate Christmas Eve worship services, including an early, energetic gathering for little ones—with a real infant in the manger!

Linda's passion for working with youth extended to PCC camping at Gracefield, Cairn and Kintail and leadership roles at Youth Trienniums and Canada Youth.

Brooke and Linda have support-

ed LGBTQI+ inclusion, with Linda marching alongside fellow Presbyterians at Toronto's Pride Parade. They were also involved with Knox's Inclusion Initiatives team that was responsible for leading two recent Affirm! gatherings. Through the Reconciliation Initiatives team, Knox has been building relationships with local Indigenous communities and leaders in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

In the wider community, Brooke served as the Protestant Police Chaplain for the Waterloo Regional Police for 11 years and, with others in the congregation, created and led worship services for local retirement homes. Adults and youth have joined Brooke and Linda on mission and outreach activities, including Habitat builds in Romania and Nicaragua, trips to Winnipeg's Inner City Missions, a Holy Land tour, an exploration of Celtic Christianity in Scotland and Ireland, and teaching English in China through the Amity Foundation.

The construction of Knox's new church, which opened in 2011, was a significant accomplishment in the life of the congregation. The aging structure was replaced with a much larger, accessible, and welcoming building that remains in the centre of Waterloo. A lot of blood, sweat, tears and prayer went into this major endeavour, and Brooke and Linda, along with congregational leaders, guided the way. This open, flexible new space provides opportunities for expanded ministry, including Wednesdays@Knox, a weekly lunch and speaker program for seniors. Embedding digital technology in the new building enables live-streaming that is essential to maintaining worship, programs and operation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2014, Knox College honoured Brooke and Linda with the Distinguished Leadership Award for their "unique and outstanding service and accomplishments to the church and society." The award noted the renewal of their church, youth programs and the establishment of community partnerships.

After such remarkable careers, and more than 400 baptisms and 350 weddings, it's time to wish the Ashfields well as they embark on a new journey together. Although they are retiring, God still has plenty for them to do!

You're invited! Join the special Sunday worship service and celebration of the Ashfields' ministry and retirement live-streamed (knoxwaterloo.ca) on Sunday, Sept. 27, 10–11:45 a.m. (Eastern). Expressions of congratulations and gratitude can be shared via the Knox website or church office.

Reopening in Sarnia

By the Rev. Allan Farris, Paterson Memorial Presbyterian Church and Laurel Lea St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Sarnia, Ont.

COVID-19 does funny things to time. March of this year feels like a lifetime ago, or maybe it's been two or three weeks. During those early days of self-isolation, I would constantly forget what day of the week it was. The lack of church services was a huge part of that. During the spring I recorded and posted services on Saturday, and it threw off my whole sense of timing. It's a tired old joke that ministers only have to work one hour each week, but, wow, when that one hour gets taken away, it makes all the other hours of the other six days feel strange.

In early June, my two congregations in Sarnia, Ont., felt as though they were settling in for a long haul of worshipping via screens. The Ontario government's announcement that churches would be allowed to hold public worship services again (with restrictions) starting June 12 caught us by surprise. We were suddenly faced with three questions: *Do we open? If so, How do we do it safely? And under it all, Why? Why worship together before a global pandemic is truly over?*

We decided to open on June 21, and the *How* was relatively simple. Keeping attendance to 30% building capacity is unfortunately not difficult in the summer, pandemic or no. We measured out two metres and taped flowers or angels to every third pew. We bought masks to hand out and put up the government-provided signs about symptoms of COVID-19. We pulled Bibles and hymn books out of pews and made sure everything was on the screen. We obtained Lysol wipes for the washrooms, gave guidance for greeters, read the guidelines, brainstormed solutions and made it happen. More difficult were the emotions around what we would have to leave out of worship altogether. "No distributing materials" means no communion, no breakfast program before the first service or coffee and snacks after the second, no time of fellowship before or after, no programs for children, and no singing, not even by one person from the front.

All of those "no's" really force the question of *Why?* One person told me after the first service that it almost felt worse to see everyone and not get to really talk than it was not to see each other at all. Why worship at all with all of these restrictions? Why take the risk



if we can't even...well, you name it. If "going to church" is a product we're buying, the product is pretty low-quality right now. The sermon was fine on YouTube, and the music was actually easier. But worshipping together isn't a product for sale. It doesn't have to make sense from within the mighty cult of individual consumerism in which we live. Our culture is divided on worship right now. For many people it's a frivolity, a tolerated remnant of a less-enlightened past. For others it is acting out the most basic purpose of human life, to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."

The truth is, we actually need each other in order to follow God. I do absolutely believe that the Holy Spirit can and does move with power when we are alone. God will sometimes speak in a still small voice just to me, just to you. It has been my experience that much more often the Spirit chooses to move when we are together. I pray better on my own if I've been meeting with my prayer partner. I read the Bible more faithfully in private if I've been talking about it with other people.

Writing this article in mid-July, most people at Paterson Memorial and Laurel Lea St. Matthew's churches have not come back to worship in person yet; some are still watching online. Some people have been apologetic about that, and I have tried to be reassuring. Our country is opening up slowly and carefully, and services of public worship are a part of that; everyone needs to use their judgement and wisdom on when to go back out into the world. I do know where that apology is coming from though. People know that they are not coming to worship just for themselves. Other people need them there. Worship looks and sounds very strange right now, and it is a lot to figure out for a small group of people. It is so good to be together, though! It helps that "one hour of work," and the rest of the week, make sense.



Linda, Brooke and Session members at a 2009 groundbreaking ceremony for the new church.

NEWS

A Growing Partnership



By Heather Chappell,
Stewardship & Planned Giving

At one time, a section of the lawn at Morningside-High Park (MHP) Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., was a gated lawn bowling pitch. It was off limits to anyone who wasn't a member. Now, that same space houses a community garden. It is a place where neighbourhood families come to sit and enjoy some cool shade on a hot day; where children pick sweet strawberries; and where vegetables are planted and tended so that fresh produce can be shared with those who need it.

Established in 2013, on the initiative of the Rev. Dr. Karen Dimock (now minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa) and MHP member Fiona Yeudall, the garden is one of a long line of projects that the congregation has embraced as it strives to be a greener community with a commitment to reduce, reuse and recycle. This includes solar panels, which were installed in 2013 and continue to feed energy back into the power grid.

Faith-based gardening is an opportunity to put faith into action through community outreach. Gina McKenzie-Lodge recalls that as a new member, the garden project was the perfect opportunity for her to get involved. In 2014, the congregation built up the garden with cedar-bed boxes, including one that was accessible by wheelchair, walker or chair. Plants were started from seed, and vegetables grew in abundance. That year, almost 600 pounds of produce was shared with the congregation, community and people in need!

During the busy summer months, it can be difficult to find the consistent labour needed to maintain a garden, and the past two seasons have been sparse. Yet the garden was not dismantled.

Then came COVID-19. Suddenly, people had time to spare. They were looking for ways to connect, for places to volunteer, for opportunities to make a meaningful and impactful difference. A woman who recently moved into a condo in the neighbourhood noticed the church gardens while passing by.

She emailed to ask if she could clean up the flower garden, since she no longer had a backyard and needed some gardening therapy. She said, "I know that this space is valued by the community, especially now during these trying times."

The Rev. Janet Ryu-Chan says that the vegetable garden is thriving during COVID-19 because of partnership. Windermere United Church connected MHP with Neighbours Helping Neighbours, a local group that matches volunteers with requests for help. This partnership provided access to community members that would never have been reached otherwise. Janet asked for donations of plants as well as volunteers to weed, water, harvest and deliver produce. And people responded. Seedlings—tomatoes, peppers, Swiss chard and basil—were donated by a nearby community garden that had surplus plants. There are now 10 volunteers—seven from the community, and three from the church.

Janet shared, "Despite everything, our garden has managed to survive. It's a little miracle. I really believe it was for such a time as this. And God has put people in place and made it possible for us to provide fresh produce for those who are experiencing food insecurity."

MHP is a small congregation, but because of these partnerships, they are able to accomplish more than they could have imagined during a time of pandemic.

When the produce is ready for harvesting, MHP plans to partner with Sistering, a multi-service agency for at-risk, socially isolated women and trans people who are homeless or precariously housed; and Romero House, which provides transitional housing and settlement services for refugee claimants through a model of accompaniment.

In 2020, MHP's stewardship campaign centred around Matthew 10, "Freely you have received, freely give." The community garden ties into this theme nicely—generosity, growth and hard work resulting in harvest.

There is a wildness to the garden right now. Janet laughs, "There are weeds growing everywhere! And yet the tomatoes are still growing, the peppers are still growing...it's a wonderful reminder that life goes on. Life is messy. Community is messy. Yet in the messiness, there is great beauty."

It is because of partnership—with Windermere United Church, Neighbours Helping Neighbours, church members, community members—that the garden will impact the lives of people who are struggling.

Janet says, "There's no way MHP could have done this on our own. That's what I really want to get across. It's only because we were able to connect with others. It's all about partnership. And of course, it's also about God working in peoples' hearts. The Creator has been sowing seeds so that partnerships can begin and grow in God's time."

Gina adds, "I am so glad to see the garden still thriving and fresh food being donated. It is just incredible to have been part of starting something so amazing and positive. I always felt that the garden was to be a sign of hope and life for the community."



The Rev. Janet Ryu-Chan and Morningside-High Park Presbyterian Church member Ben Oliver weeding the community garden.



The virtual choir at First Presbyterian Church in Collingwood, Ont.

Connections in Collingwood

By Marlene Weatherall, First
Presbyterian Church in Collingwood,
Ont.

First Presbyterian Church in Collingwood, Ont., has continued to reach out in God's love, into the lives of each other and into the world, even during COVID-19 restrictions. While congregants miss gathering for Sunday morning worship in our beautiful sanctuary, our live-streamed worship services have been very successful and well-attended. We have been able to reach not only our own congregants, but also family members and friends from far and wide who would not normally be able to attend in person.

Connection to all of our congregants has been maintained through weekly email communications from the minister and the director of pastoral care. Those who are not accessible online are contacted over the phone by

members of our Pastoral Care team.

First Presbyterian Church is blessed to have a very active music ministry. The presence of the praise band and worship choir is missed by everyone, especially by the singers and our music director, who cherish the fellowship of Thursday practices. In an attempt to recapture that fellowship, members of the choir have been sharing their singing virtually in our live-streamed services so that we all can enjoy the choir remotely. What a blessing.

A number of our members are gifted with artistic talent and have been lending their skills to craft Easter cards, Mother's Day cards with handmade beaded bracelets enclosed, and Father's Day cards with painted friendship rocks. All were distributed personally for each occasion. Birthdays and graduations have also been recognized.

Distanced coffee and conversa-

tion gatherings have been enjoyed (in groups of five at a time) in the First Presbyterian Cemetery Chapel. Meetings and activities take place on a regular basis online with families, teen communicants, youth groups and the Sunday School.

As restrictions are loosened and the church begins to plan its reopening, we intend to keep these new initiatives in place to complement traditional Sunday worship.



NEWS

Recognizing Elders in Ottawa



The Rev. James Hurd with Judy and Stewart Reeves.

By Dennis Featherstone, Clerk of Session, Parkwood Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont.

In March, the Session of Parkwood Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., formally acknowledged, with thanks-giving to God, the service of Stewart and Judy Reeves, who together have rendered some 90 years of combined service as elders in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Stewart was ordained as an elder on Feb. 24, 1963, at The Presbyterian Church of Saint David in Halifax, N.S. When he moved to Dartmouth, N.S., in 1964, he considered a transfer of membership to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Dartmouth. Learning, however, that a new congregation was to begin meeting in a school within sight of their house, affiliation there was to be his destiny. The new congregation was Iona Presbyterian Church, Dartmouth, and Stewart was elected as one of the congregation's first elders in January 1965. He was appointed clerk of Session on Feb. 5, 1965, the office he held until April 27, 1975, when a transfer to Ottawa, Ont., necessitated his resignation.

On Sept. 25, 1978, Stewart and Judy were received as members of Parkwood Presbyterian Church in Ottawa by transfer of certificate. Both were elected elders in 1979.

The Session minutes record that their induction was approved on June 26, 1979, and scheduled for Sept. 16, 1979: Judy by ordination, and Stewart by admission as an elder previously ordained.

Stewart was an active and devoted elder at Parkwood for some 33 years, from 1979 until Dec. 31, 2012, when his request to resign from active service was accepted with regret by the Session. Judy made a similar request

on Jan. 1, 2020, after more than 40 years of active service.

There are likely few other couples in The Presbyterian Church in Canada who have a comparable record of service as elders.

At Parkwood, we have been blessed by their contributions in many ways. Judy has demonstrated active, faithful and attentive care for those in her district, visiting and maintaining contact and offering prayer and support in many ways. For several years, she quietly undertook the goodwill task of sending cards and notes on behalf of the Session to those who were ill or bereaved, or who celebrated significant life events. Stewart's prior experience and service at Iona Presbyterian Church, and as a clerk of Session, enabled him to share wisdom and guidance with those responsible for policy and planning at Parkwood. His musical contributions as a member and the president of the choir are remembered with thanksgiving, as is his time spent convening the former Worship and Nurture Committee, particularly in the search for and recruitment of leadership for music ministry. Together, Stewart and Judy have rendered significant services to the wider community, delivering Meals on Wheels within our city.

The Session of Parkwood Presbyterian Church rejoices in the gifts of God's grace to Stewart and Judy Reeves and, through them, to the church in advancing our witness and service to Jesus Christ.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3-6 NIV).



By Evan Mounce, Director of Music Ministries, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

The ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected every aspect of my musical life, but the impact has been felt most significantly by the choirs with whom I work. I was talking with my colleague Tim Shantz in May, brainstorming about what the next season for the Calgary Philharmonic Chorus might look like, and he suggested that we treat the season like a sabbatical. I think this is the perfect way to reframe our current circumstances: using this time as a chance to study, acquire new skills, and connect with the community and with each other. From here on, the music ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., is on a COVID-19 Sabbatical.

During Pre-COVID times, choir practices at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church often began with a five-minute warm-up, followed by a speedy survey through the service music, and then our best attempt to get through a stack of new pieces set out that evening. In contrast, at our last online choir meeting, we took turns talking about our plans for the summer and how we were doing, and shared memories of a former

Music Ministry Musing from Calgary

choir member who had passed away. We discussed our next virtual choir projects, our Minute for Music video series, and what the fall might look like for us. There has been a steep technological learning curve with the filming of videos and logging into online meetings, but we have persevered and have acquired some new and useful skills to help us stay connected.

St. Andrew's has reached out to people outside our church community, hiring musicians from across Canada and the U.S. to submit videos for incorporation into our live-stream services. We are doing our part to help musicians in a time when they need our financial support. We are also planning to support a Canadian composer by commissioning a piece for the choir. Working directly with a composer gives us a chance to get more involved and invested in the music that we are learning and performing and gives us another project to look forward to: selecting texts and collaborating in the creative process.

The constraints of COVID-19 have fuelled our creativity.

We must re-imagine what it looks like to gather as a group, and what it sounds like to put together voices when everyone is apart. Like many places, next fall will look and sound different for us at St. Andrew's PC, but we are seizing this opportunity and accepting this creative challenge. Kellie Walsh, artistic director of Shallaway Youth Choir and Lady Cove Women's Choir in Newfoundland, shared some words early in the pandemic that I keep coming back to for inspiration:

"If a choir is only about singing and performing—there will be no choir for a while. If a choir is about teaching and learning, growing, connecting, community, cultural exploration and transmission, and innovating—we will find a way to have choir."

Although our COVID-19 Sabbatical wasn't anticipated, we are using this time to grow in life together and we are going to come back to our music ministry refreshed and renewed.



Members of St. Andrew's choir.

Moderator Welcomed to Fallingbrook

By the Rev. Angela J. Cluney, Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church in Scarborough, Ont.

Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church in Scarborough, Ont., was pleased to host our moderator, the Rev. Amanda Currie, on March 1. Amanda joined us for worship, and she preached and co-officiated Communion with me before joining us for a luncheon in her honour.

This was a special visit, not only because the congregation had never hosted a moderator before, but also because Amanda had last preached for us as a Knox College student in 2001 for Knox College Sunday.

It was an extra delight for me to

welcome Amanda to be my worship partner as we first met each other on our first day as students at Knox College. A few months shy of 20 years later, we were able to lead worship together. What a blessing!



The Rev. Angela J. Cluney (left) and the Rev. Amanda Currie, Moderator of General Assembly.

NEWS

Keeping an Annual Tradition Alive in St. John's

By Andrew Halliday, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in St. John's, N.L.

Found in the oldest city in Canada, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in St. John's is also the oldest Presbyterian Church in Newfoundland and Labrador, and has a proud, rich history. Like the heritage of its Scottish roots, it is no stranger to difficult times and changes. Spanning many family generations, it has seen three destructions by fire (the last was "The Great Fire" of 1892), and relocations to where it stands today. A recognizable part of the St. John's skyline, "The Kirk on the Hill" is well known throughout the city.

Memories and records still available tell us the first Lobster Supper was held in 1976, when some men from the congregation, using only camp stoves, boiled a modest hundred or

less of the "Atlantic Crustaceans." It was one of many fundraisers at the time to support the construction of a new, modern Church Hall.

That Church Hall officially opened in 1980, containing church offices, the Sunday School, a meeting parlour, full kitchen and gymnasium.

Four decades later, the Annual Lobster Dinner has become The Kirk's most anticipated event, always held in the second week of June, now serving over 400 people each year.

The addition of the hall and support from local businesses allowed for expansion to a dinner for over 100 people, with volunteers turning the gym into a dining hall and preparing salads and desserts. On the morning of the dinner, cases of fresh lobster are dropped off and boiled on-site (now using commercial-sized equipment and actual sea water). In

the evening, another volunteer team serves the dinner to the tables. Over the years, the dinner may have become a little more elaborate, but has always followed the same combination: two full lobsters, three side salads, refreshments and dessert.

Growing popularity, limited seating and restrictions for some to get to the hall in person saw the introduction of take-out meals, containing everything that the dine-in dinner had, for the same enjoyment at home. In recent years, take-out numbers have grown to almost 250. At two lobsters per person (including our "staff"), this means that volunteers have been boiling approximately 900 lobsters in a single day, every year.

Making all this happen has become a well-oiled machine of countless people that never fails nor disappoints.

Normally, the Dinner Committee starts coordinating as early as February. This year, with so many COVID-19 complications, the first phone call wasn't until April, but it wasn't for planning. With so many fears and restrictions in place, it had to be asked: Could we do it this year? How would we do it? Did we even have enough time left? We watched as other groups were forced to cancel critical fundraisers. Would St. Andrew's have to do the same?

A long-standing fixture in the downtown core, The Kirk has a history of supporting people and outreach organizations in our city. We also contribute to humanitarian projects around the world. The support of our people and the public is immensely important to maintaining our mission activities that help others. Could we still do that without our biggest fundraiser?

Call it Presbyterian obstinacy, Newfoundland determination, or simply the bond among our members to help one another—but we would proceed. We would make it work! We threw out the traditions and established playbook from the past 3 to 4 decades and started from scratch.

The Kirk, like many congregations, has doctors, lawyers, chefs, project planners and other professionals in our church family. They rose to the call for guidance and participation;



Long-time volunteer Andrew Halliday stands in front of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, ready to greet vehicles as they come for pick-up orders. PHOTO CREDIT: JEREMY EATON/CBC.



The annual Lobster Dinner at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in St. John's, N.L.



A volunteer greets a vehicle as it pulls up in front of the hall, and puts their take-out orders in the trunk.

one member even made lobster-print masks for volunteers.

We would *only* make take-out boxes, and since the gym wouldn't be used for the dinner, physically distanced workstations were set up. Limited family groups would assemble the meals, with our head chef ensuring safe preparation of all the food. A refrigerated trailer was donated where completed boxes could be kept as they were made. To maintain consistency, our traditional date remained the same, but instead of one day, would stretch over two. We set a goal of 400 dinners (200 each day). Could this be done?

Our event, usually coordinated over three to four months, now only had six weeks to execute. Titled our "2020 Stay Home Year," advertising didn't actually start until week two of planning, leaving only four weeks to take orders. The orders were taken by phone and email, with payment arranged through e-transfer or credit card. A schedule was made, and customers were given a specific day/time to pick up their orders.

We may have underestimated our public support. Our 400 orders were sold out in just under three weeks!



Each morning of the now two-day pickup schedule, a ticket number was drawn, and two lucky customers received a special prize package when they arrived.

A no-contact system was created: entrance and exit points in the parking lot were marked with signs, cars would pull up and check in with a volunteer to have their name and order confirmed. A note with their number of dinners was stuck to their car. They would then proceed to the trailer in front of the hall, another volunteer would take the note, put that number of dinners in their trunk, and off they would go. It ran seamlessly; better than anticipated.

After all the numbers were balanced, the 44th Annual Kirk Lobster Dinner turned out to be our most successful year yet. This unimaginable success showed what our church family can do when faced with serious challenges, and we were able to provide some of the normal comforts that this year has taken away from so many. Most importantly, it allowed us to stay connected with our community, a positive example of giving and support in the face of adversity.

The only question now is: What do we do next year? Have we set new standards and goals? We shall have to wait and see.

St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver

DIRECTOR OF PRESBYTERIAN FORMATION

The Presbyterian Director of Denominational Formation (DDF) is seconded by St. Andrew's Hall, a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, to serve on the faculty of The Vancouver School of Theology. This is a half-time position and is not tenure track. The successful candidate for this position must be, or be capable of becoming, a Minister of Word and Sacraments in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Familiarity with the doctrine, polity, ethos and history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada is essential. A record of effective ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada including an awareness of missional leadership in post-Christendom Canada will be an asset.

The responsibilities of this position include recruiting, mentoring, supporting and inspiring Presbyterian students with teaching, coordinating community life, worship, pastoral care and prayer support in cooperation with our SAH Chaplain, reporting to presbyteries and other Presbyterian Church in Canada bodies on student progress.

For more information please see www.standrews.edu

Applications should be sent electronically in confidence to Dr. Ross Lockhart, Dean of St. Andrew's Hall, deansoffice@standrews.edu with the subject line "St. Andrew's Hall DDF Search."

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS AT 12 PM PACIFIC ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2020.



Subscribe to the monthly PConnect e-newsletter for the latest news and info from the PCC
presbyterian.ca/sign-up



NEWS

Lawn Chair Ministry in Newmarket



By the Rev. Robert Royal, part of the ministry team at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket, Ont., along with the Rev. Laura Duggan



Since the early 1830s, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church has been a caring congregation that seeks to share, show and speak the love and joy of God in Newmarket, Ont., and the surrounding areas. Both our faith and civic communities are very important to us and, as such, we continue to support our multi-generational, multicultural, multi-denominational and interfaith community by way of the Newmarket Food Pantry, Loaves and Fishes project for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Inn from the Cold, Boarding Home Ministry and the



Prayer Shawl Pastoral Ministry. We also do meaningful outreach with all our friends and neighbours by way of telephone, social media, and now outdoor home or Lawn Chair Visits.

The idea for the Lawn Chair Ministry came from a conversation I had with a friend when the COVID-19 pandemic began to slam the door on all face-to-face social interactions. The question was posed, "How will you minister to the congregation?" With physical distancing a new and harsh reality, the only plausible solution for a face-to-face meeting seemed to be a phone conversation through the protection of a window or glass door. Hence the birth of the Lawn Chair Ministry. In those early days of Lawn Chair Visits, I sat outside and had a

phone chat with someone in their home. It is physical distancing at its best. Since the weather has warmed, my visits have been on driveways, front and back lawns, decks and patios, gazebos and Florida rooms. It continues to be a wonderful way to become better acquainted, solve all the world's problems, share in a prayer and blessing, and even celebrate Holy Communion when requested. To date, I have been on 30 Lawn Chair Visits with many more scheduled, and I thank all those I've visited for their warm hospitality.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.



Anxious for Nothing in Uxbridge

By David Phillips, St. Andrew's – Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont.

For five weeks, three churches in Uxbridge, Ont., worked together to host an online Bible study. The participants were led by the Rev. Canon Mark Kingham (St. Paul's Anglican Church); the Rev. Karen Croxall (Trinity United Church) and David Phillips (St. Andrew's – Chalmers Presbyterian Church). The study

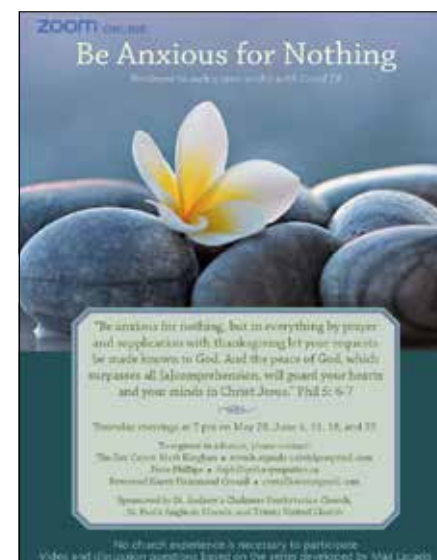
was Max Lucado's "Anxious for Nothing," a five-session video Bible study based on Philippians 4:4–8. For each of the five weeks, there was a theme based on those verses. The sessions were: "Rejoice in the Lord Always" (Week One); "Let Your Gentleness Be Evident to All" (Week Two); "Present Your Requests to God" (Week Three); "The Peace of God Will Guard Your Heart" (Week Four); and "Meditate on These Things" (Week Five).

The purpose was to bring people together to offer support and to talk freely with one another about their concerns. Each week there was a short worship service prior to the video session, and then participants broke into small groups for discussion. It was a time for us to talk, listen and reflect on the Bible passage among a small group of people. We shared concerns about loneliness and the inability to see family and friends during this time

of physical separation. People were anxious about COVID-19 and the most recent news about racism. But prayer helped us overcome our anxieties.

Participants felt strongly that this study took place at the right time in our lives and that the support we gave each other was very important.

What is next? We are looking at another series with the three churches in the fall.





REFLECTIONS

Accepting the Smudge Bowl

By Vivian Ketchum, originating from Wauzhushk 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

A picture is worth a thousand words, as the saying goes. A picture I took of my Smudge bowl in the park was one of those that had a thousand words or, in my case, a thousand tears. A story of my healing journey.

Looking back at the picture made me realize how far I have come in my healing journey. I was one of those children that attended residential school. I attended Cecilia Jeffrey Indian School as a child. It left me with mental, emotional and physical scars that are taking a lifetime to heal.

It left mental and spiritual scars on me. The fear of my own culture.

That it was evil and not to be practiced. I never saw anyone practicing Smudging or any of my Indigenous spirituality in residential school. Sunday School and daily prayers were what was seen and done by us children.

As an adult I struggled to overcome my past. My addictions. Gradually, I became involved in social activism. In the early 1990s, I began to see groups of people speaking out about the abuses in residential schools. I even spoke out in a few groups about my personal experiences. I also saw people Smudging at these events. When the bowl of Smudge came to me, I would always turn away. Images of church and prayers came to mind. Still I felt a pull when the bowl came towards me. A part of me was awakening, but it was not the right time.



Ironically, part of my healing journey was to walk with the church. The same church that ran the residential school I had attended as a child. I joined committees and added my voice. One of them was the Healing and Reconciliation Committee. During parts of the meeting or sharing groups there was Smudging. Again, I refused to take part when that bowl came to me. I no longer left the room when there was a Smudging ceremony. I let the sweet smell of sage and cedar wrap around me. I found

it healing and grounding when I was working with the church.

I'm not sure when I accepted my first cleansing of the Smudge. It felt so right. Part of me that was lost had come home. Even when I was Smudging inside a church. That Shadow Child that I had carried with me for so long stopped weeping for moments when I Smugged. I refer to the nightmares of residential school as my Shadow Child. A reclaiming of me. My identity. My culture. My healing.

Earlier this year I created my own Smudge bowl. I felt that it was something that I had to do, and it had to be a certain one. I painted it with the four colours of the Wheel. Once I created it, I took it outside and added the Sage. Lit it. Smugged. Took a picture of the bowl. Several pictures. I looked at the pictures. People saw a very nice picture. I saw my healing journey in those pictures.

A thousand tears. A thousand words. A thousand steps. Of my Shadow Child.

Be the Light

An excerpt from a reflection by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin, Thundering Eagle Woman, Place of Hope Indigenous Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man.

I am beyond enraged and that is not good for my soul.
A fury is ignited in me,
I am inflamed by the accumulated feelings of injustice being done and not being acknowledged.
Everything is out of balance.

Where is my witness—the one who gets it—acknowledges it—admits my person-hood has been violated, by the treatment of my race.

We Christians, Presbyterians, are all in this together

Life is about all life benefiting all life.

Jesus showed me that
My Indigenous Elders taught me that

The character of my life has been built on that.

Love, generosity, compassion, service.

It's all a way of being Creator set out for us

Where did that unifying way of being go?
Where did our society go so wrong?

How do we get back to keeping our eyes on the Light, on the Truth, on the Way?

I have no words to define my fury fuelled by injustice.

If you are people in places of influence and power
Make it your business to right the injustices.

Always demand that justice be done.

At home, at work, in the streets, in politics, and in the church.

You can help.

Stay in the Light.
Focus on the Light.
Be the Light.

Music Has Charms



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

Do you remember Vera Lynn, the songstress of the 1940s, when her music filled the hearts of so many members of the Armed Forces? Perhaps you are asking me, What has this to do with a church newspaper? Let me explain.

Living is a battle...we all have our own little wars to win or lose. As a child I fought mine with asthma and finally won that one at nearly 30 years of age when I got professional help. My husband fought a battle with cancer for five years, but sadly, he lost that one.

Life has its own battle dress code. As a child I was laden with cloth handkerchiefs...no tissues

in those days, and I went through several every day, depending on the severity of my asthma that day. The battle dress of a soldier is very important, but what he has learned before he hits the trenches is important, too.

Vera Lynn gave them music...not in a piece of equipment to be played, but in their hearts. They carried it with them as a piece of armour to fight anxiety, fear, depression and even pain.

How often scripture does the same thing. We may have forgotten chapter and verse but we remember what it said and we hold those things in our hearts and we share them with each other.

Today's pandemic is a war being played out around the world, but God's word is always there, uplifting us, ensuring us of our Saviour's presence in all situations.

We will sing the Lord's song of victory: "Trust in the Lord, with all your heart." And we will trust God to see us through this.

REFLECTIONS

Disaster Strikes Beirut

By Sylvia Haddad, Director of PCC partner in Lebanon, Joint Christian Committee for Social Service in Lebanon (JCC). The JCC is one of the oldest non-governmental organizations working with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. JCC is part of the Department of Service for Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) founded in 1950. Besides Lebanon, DSPR operates in four other regions: the West Bank, Galilee, Gaza and Jordan, with a central office for coordination in Jerusalem. Over the years, JCC has provided a wide range of services to the refugees in Lebanon, which began with relief work but soon changed focus to education and vocational training.

On the evening of August 4, Beirut felt the earth shake. I live on the 10th floor so my reaction was to run down the steps as it felt like an earthquake was about to demolish my building. A sharp deafening blast stopped me, and I went to the window to search for Israeli planes bombing us, an

experience we have had. But the sky was clear so I ran to the balcony looking for smoke. I saw huge window frames flying from the flats beneath me landing on cars. I looked for our doorman's children who play in an area by the parked cars where the windowpanes had fallen. Relief engulfed me when I saw they were not there.

There was no radio or TV as it was not our turn to have electricity. I got my battery-operated radio and I heard the terror of what was happening. When the electricity came on, I watched the television and was horrified by what I saw. My doorbell rang and my two grandchildren stood there saying, "Our house has been hit, and our parents have gone to check." Their apartment, a mile and a half from the scene of explosion, was badly damaged. We all thought, thank God they were not in their house when the explosion happened.

The next morning, the horror of what had happened was made clear.

An explosion had destroyed the port completely. A large number of the 1,000 people working there had disappeared under the rubble or into the sea. The main grain silo, which holds about 85% of the country's wheat, was destroyed along with many containers storing medicines and life-sustaining equipment. All the buildings around the port were very badly damaged.

Parallel to the port street is historic Jemaizeh Street, one of the few remaining old streets recalling the history and traditions of old Beirut. These historic buildings started to fall, and people screamed as many disappeared under the rubble. The scene was the same at the Orthodox hospital where many of the patients and staff had no chance of survival when parts of the structures fell. The search for those missing continues as people carry pictures of their loved ones to hospitals and morgues.

Reports state that about 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate unloaded from a disabled vessel in 2014 had been stored in a port warehouse. An accident appears to have caused the chemicals to explode.

As time passes, the consequences of this explosion will be serious. Lebanon imports 80% of what it consumes but the port will no longer receive any goods. Additionally, the loss of the port means the government has lost a major source of in-



Sylvia Haddad speaking to children and their parents at the JCC in 2015.

come. The timing couldn't be worse as the country's currency has collapsed after years of mismanagement and corruption. Hundreds of thousands of people cannot buy food, medicine or fuel. The Lebanese people watch helplessly as they see their savings wiped out and their purchasing power disappear.

The coronavirus crisis has placed great pressure on the health sector. The damage sustained by the main hospitals as the result of the explosion has further reduced the ability of the hospitals to cope and the hospital staff use parking lots for emergency care.

Many of the Palestinian refugee camps are far from the port where the explosion took place. But two of

the camps near Beirut, Dbayeh (10 miles north of the port) and Sabra to the south-east of Beirut, felt the explosion. Currently, the Palestinians living in the camps who have been trained on helping others, especially with those who need extra care and the elderly, are working on how they can help.

This is the time to support a country that has hosted the Palestinian refugees for so many years. We intend to do whatever we can to show our gratitude to God with the hope of getting help from our friends and partners.

To contribute to relief efforts in Beirut, visit [WeRespond.ca/pwsd-beirut](https://www.werespond.ca/pwsd-beirut).

PULPIT VACANCIES

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

Fredericton, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Atlantic Provinces

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

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

Kingston, St. John's & Seeley's Bay, Sand Hill (full-time minister, 2-point charge) – CNEOB

Kitchener, Doon (full-time minister) – CNEOB

Kitchener, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – CNEOB

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

Madoc, St. Peter's (full-time minister) – CNEOB

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

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

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

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

Windsor, University Community Church (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

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

DEATH NOTICES

Read all full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

Joy Margaret Ross Randall
Cobourg, Ont.
Deceased July 10, 2020

Helen Tetley
Toronto, Ont.
Deceased June 14, 2020

The Rev. Dr. Hans Kouwenberg
Vancouver, B.C.
Deceased June 10, 2020

Elizabeth Marion (Betty) Kenn
Scarborough, Ont.
Deceased May 31, 2020

Doreen Roberta Morrison
Toronto, Ont.
Deceased May 25, 2020

Vera Ann Blake
Barryville, N.B.
Deceased May 12, 2020

The Rev. Patricia Elford
Pembroke, Ont.
Deceased April 8, 2020

Gordon Kenneth Cameron
Moose Jaw, Sask.
Deceased July 20, 2020

JUST WONDERING...



Submit your questions to connection@presbyterian.ca

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

St. Andrew's has some Bibles and a piano that were given to the congregation in memory of people over the years. Do we have to give valuable items back to the family that gave them? Do we have to keep these items in perpetuity?

This is an excellent question that comes up often in congregations. First, these matters should always be dealt with sensitively and pastorally, as these items can have great meaning for people. Second, if a charitable

receipt for the gift has been issued to the donor, no matter when the donation was made, the donor has no claim whatsoever on the item. Finally, the Session decides the needs of the congregation and decides upon the location and use of items accordingly. The Rev. Don Muir, Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly, has written a helpful guide for congregations in this regard. His resource called, "Making Space: How to Manage Church Fixtures," can be found at presbyterian.ca/enhancing-space, beginning on page 6.

We have a teenager who is very active in our congregation and who identifies as LGBTQI. Are we allowed to ask her to teach Sunday School or

do we have to wait to see whether the remits about sexuality pass?

The Session is responsible for the recruitment, appointment, training and support of teachers and education leaders as well as the selection and approval of resource materials and programs that will be used in Christian education. Anyone who the Session believes demonstrates the maturity, gifts and enthusiasm to teach church school is eligible to be a teacher and education leader. Gender identity and sexual orientation in no way disqualify anyone from service in the church. The remits related to sexuality currently before the church concern ministers officiating at and entering same-sex marriage and are not related to sexual orientation.

CROSSWORD

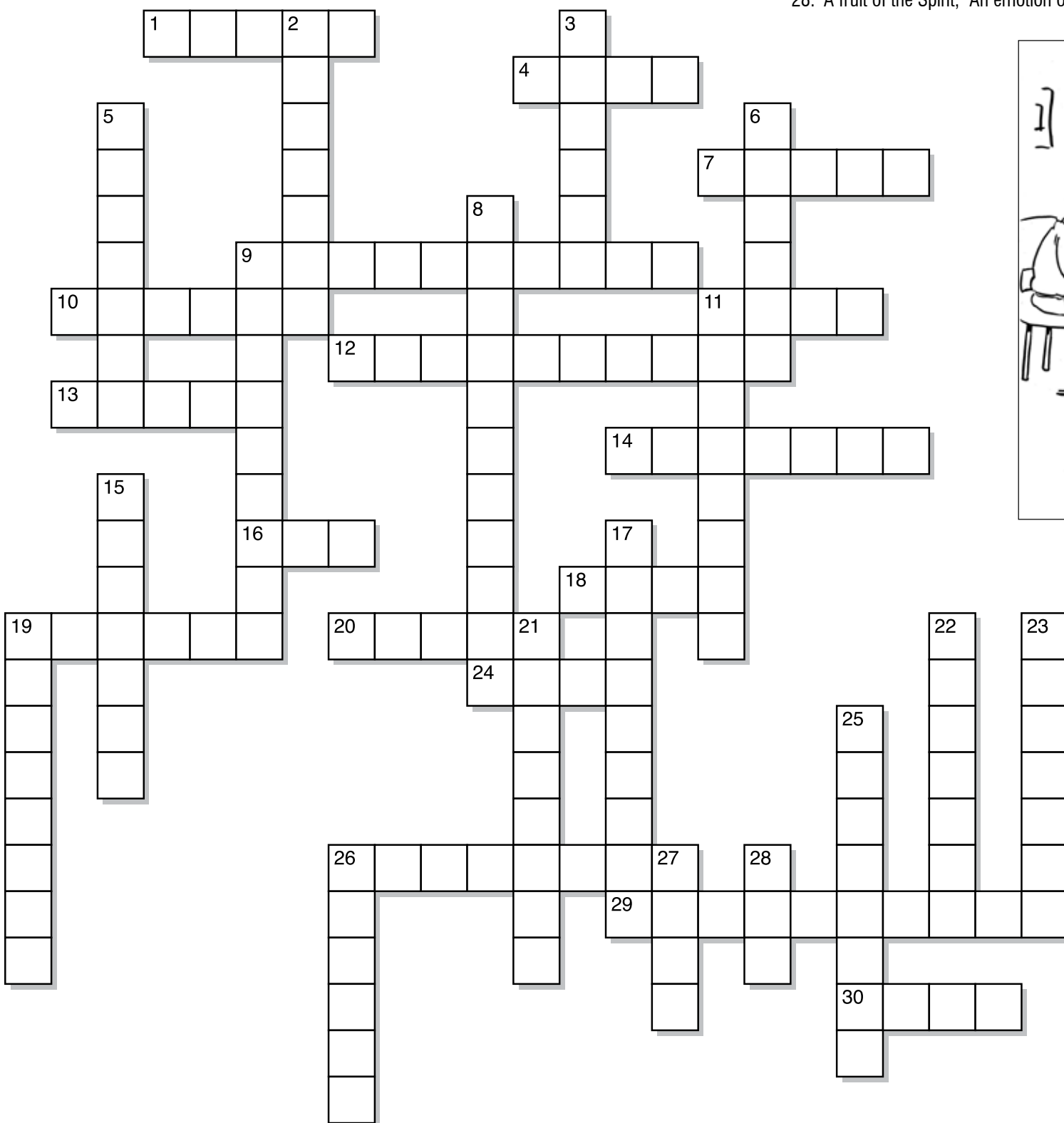
Test your knowledge with this edition's latest crossword puzzle.

ACROSS

1. The last word in the Old Testament.
4. Gospel at one time thought to have been written by a doctor.
7. The substance God gave to the Israelites after they fled Egypt.
9. A fruit of the Spirit, "Considerate, mild and free from harshness."
10. Also known as the "black-bearded barbarian," he was the first PCC mission staff assigned to Taiwan.
11. How many fruits of the Holy Spirit were mentioned in the Book of Galatians?
12. The last book in the Christian Bible.
13. Almost two-thirds of refugees to Canada come from three countries: Afghanistan, South Sudan and _____.
14. "God in three persons, blessed _____."
16. Industrious insect of Proverbs.
18. The shortest verse in the Bible states that Jesus _____.
19. Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian, for instance.
20. Regional governing body comprised of neighbouring presbyteries.
24. The other ark of the covenant.
26. Order of _____ Ministry.
29. To express agreement with, after the fact.
30. Gothic; or rank of angels.

DOWN

2. The first name of the first woman to be ordained as a minister in the PCC.
3. The Presbyterians Sharing logo is _____ in colour.
5. In this eastern European country where the Danube river flows, Kalunba welcomes refugees and provides assistance.
6. "Institutes" author; friend of Hobbes.
8. A liturgical word meaning "blessing."
9. The fruits of the Spirit are found in this book of the Bible.
11. The Committee to _____ Standing Committees presents nominations to the General Assembly for its standing committees.
15. No longer do I call you slaves, but I have called you _____ (John 15:15).
17. Laryngitis priest (Luke 1:20).
19. PWS&D is one of fifteen members of the _____ Foodgrains Bank.
21. Often sung when the offering is being presented.
22. This genus of houseplant is commonly known as a prayer plant because it folds its leaves in the evening.
23. In June 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released 231 Calls for _____.
25. This woman married Moses.
26. Belteshazzar's better-known other name.
27. A fruit of the Spirit, "deep affection."
28. A fruit of the Spirit, "An emotion of great delight."



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

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

- ACROSS**
1. CURSE
 2. SHIRLEY
 3. PURPLE
 4. HUNGARY
 5. MANNAN
 6. CALVIN
 7. GENTLENESS
 8. BENEDICTION
 9. GALATIANS
 10. NINE
 11. REVELATION
 12. SYRIA
 13. TRINITY
 14. ANT
 15. CANADIAN
 16. DOXOLOGY
 17. MARANTA
 18. JUSTICE
 19. ZIPPORAH
 20. DANIEL
 21. LOVE
 22. ARCH
 23. HOMOLOGATE
 24. NOAH
 25. SYNOD
 26. CREEDS
 27. WEPT
 28. MARANTA
 29. JUSTICE
 30. ZIPPORAH
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