Care for Creature and Creation: An Old Testament Call

By the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls

The creation stories of the Old Testament make it clear that humans are an integral part of the world created by God. In Genesis 1, God creates human beings on the sixth day as the ultimate act of an elaborate created order that is "very good" (1:31).

Genesis 2 uses a pun to convey the integration of humans with the natural world. Playing on the Hebrew words adam (human being) and adamah (ground), Genesis 2:7 reads, "The Lord God formed the human from the dust of the ground." A translation that catches the pun could be, "formed the earth creature from the dust of the earth." When God breathes in the breath of life, this creature of earth becomes a living being.

In both creation stories in Genesis, human beings are portrayed as having the duty of care for the created world of which they are a part. In Genesis 1, God creates humanity in God's own image and commands that it "have dominion" over all creatures (1:26 and 28). Sometimes, this has been interpreted as justification for exploiting the natural world for our own purposes. A close study of the language suggests a different picture.

In the ancient context, "dominion" often meant royal rule that could include force. However, violence and exploitation were not a necessary part of dominion. Rather, a ruler was expected to exercise dominion for the good of the people. The prophet Ezekiel condemned those who ruled abusively: "You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, ... but with force and harshness you have ruled them" (Ezekiel 34:4). With this wider meaning, Genesis 1 clearly associates human "dominion" over the natural world with God's own care-taking actions in creation.

In Genesis 2, the link between humanity and creation care is even clearer. God puts the human being into the garden in Eden with a purpose: "to till it and keep it" (2:15).



ground from which humans were formed; the same word conveys such "work" as also "service" on behalf of the earth. And the command "to keep" the garden expresses responsibility to "watch" and "protect," suggesting humanity's purpose is to care for the earth. Together, these two creation stories evoke humanity's most fundamental created purpose to be dominion exercised for the good care of creation.

This human purpose extends throughout Old Testament theology, particularly in the understanding of land. As an agrarian society, ancient Israel knew that the well-being of people is inherently connected with the sustainability of land and natural resources. The whole created order belonged to God. In the Sabbath command in Leviticus, God says as much: "... the land is mine; "Tilling" conveys cultivation of the with me you are but aliens and ten- creation's healing happen together. Testament theology. Human activities God's people today.

ants" (Leviticus 25:23). Humans as God's "tenants" are stewards to care for the land within extended families intimately connected with the fields, vineyards and pastures that sustained their lives.

Similar connections between the well-being of humans and creation echo in the words of the prophets. In Jeremiah's sermon in the temple, he reminds citizens of the relationship between their actions and God's presence and blessing in the land. "If you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, ... then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors for ever and ever" (Jeremiah

In Isaiah's vision of redemption for the people in exile, he announces the good news that human healing and

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the lame shall leap like a deer... For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert" (Isaiah 35:5–6). This prophet also draws close the link between justice and human flourishing. When humans "loose the bonds of injustice, ... let the oppressed go free, ... share your bread with the hungry, ... then your healing shall spring up quickly. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt, ... you shall be called ... the restorer of streets to live in" (Isaiah 58:6–12).

Land cultivated with good judgement; natural resources used wisely; the human community treated with care and compassion; justice pursued in all aspects of life; both humans and creatures nurtured—these are the interconnected aspects of creation care communicated in Old



using the resources of creation are always connected with the care God intended for the "very good" creation God made, and the care God commanded of human beings for one another. That call remains ours as



MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Check Out—But Never Really Leave



By the Rev. Daniel Scott, Moderator of the 2021 General Assembly

At St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont., there are 12 "EXIT" signs placed throughout the facility. They are there, of course, to illuminate the many ways out of the building. Exiting and returning—it's the rhythm of church life. Yet, like a lot of rituals in the past year, this rhythm has taken on a new form.

After the first Sunday in March 2020, the congregation was dismissed with the commissioning and benediction and, after our usual fellowship time over coffee, we exited through those clearly marked doors. Many of us have not been back since.

Leaving Christianity: Changing Allegiances in Canada since 1945 is the title of Stuart MacDonald and Brian Clarke's book that describes the exit of Canadians from churches. For most of the 1960s, '70s and '80s, we had the idea, perhaps adapted from the Eagles song Hotel California, that a person could, "check out any time you like, but you can never leave." For a time, I suppose, many of us back then just "checked out"

of church. No one anticipated that we could simply leave...and not come back.

But no one anticipated COVID-19,

So it will be interesting to see who will return to our church buildings after the pandemic. I, for one, am optimistic that many will come back, and that there will be many new faces at the church, too.

Why am I optimistic? Our churches have done an outstanding job of caring for people within the church and beyond during the pandemic. As we exited in March 2020, the people of God were commissioned to go back out into the world (not dreaming that we wouldn't be heading back to the church for quite some time): "Go in peace and may the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you."

As my friend William P. Gregory wrote: "Jesus summons his followers to bring the gospel to others, especially to the abandoned, the suffering, the hopeless, and all those on the 'existential margins' of human society" (Go Forth: Towards Community of Missionary Disciples).

Lots of Presbyterian churches sing "Go Now in Peace" as they end their services. The point of that hymn is that we are to "go" into the world. As we follow those exit signs over the doors of our churches and go into the world, we bring the Good News with us.

It is the rhythm of church life. Each week we gather and then we are sent back out into the world.

Ultimately, how we live in the world from week to week depends on our understanding of Christianity. Richard Neibuhr in his famous lectures at Austin Theological Seminary in 1949, and later published as Christ and Culture, provides us with

models of how the church relates to the world. We've seen these models in churches of all stripes in the past year and a half. Borrowing very loosely from Neibuhr's scheme, let me provide some Canadian examples of the church in the world.

Some people view the church as being in opposition to the world. Need an example? Take a look at Grace Life Church in Edmonton, Alta., protesting and defying the government shutdown of houses of worship.

On the other hand, some of us see the church as being at odds with the world. Perhaps this idea is illustrated by Cardinal Collins of Toronto in his attempts to work with the Premier on reduced capacity of worship space at 30% and then 15%.

Then again, many churches have heeded the warnings from public health and complied to mandates by closing their doors. They see a close proximity between the teachings of Jesus and democratic institutions.

There is yet another view that sees Christ as the restorer of the institutions of true society, entering society from above with gifts. These might be the Christians who aren't following through with vaccines. They are confident that God will, as they often say, "show up" and save them.

Our Presbyterian churches have responded, I suspect, to the pandemic in variations of the four models that Neibuhr articulated (opposition, tension, accommodation and synthesis). However, it is fair to say that no matter which approach each church takes, all of them have been transformed into new ways of being the church in the world. This is Neibuhr's fifth model—transformation—and it is his preferred approach.

Across the country, I have seen (mostly through social media and the Presbyterian Connection newspaper)



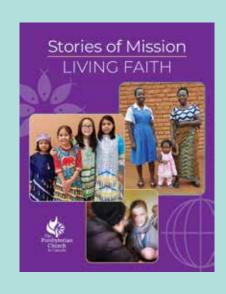
The EXIT sign at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford West Gwillimbury is well lit and inspected regularly, so people can always find their way out of the church.

how Presbyterians have adapted to virtual services of worship by: providing pastoral care in creative ways (drive-by prayer, lawn chair driveway visits, delivery of take-out Sunday school, etc.); supporting our food banks; celebrating the sacraments; and observing milestones (birthdays, anniversaries, ordinations) in new and fresh ways. In the process, we have been transformed.

Christ, the only Sovereign of our

church, is transforming us as individuals and as a society and its institutions in the midst of the pandemic.

And, when we are safely permitted to enter the doors of our churches once more (hopefully soon), it will be wonderful to be together again. Nevertheless, as always, when we exit after our services, we are commissioned to be the church in the world—The Presbyterian Church IN Canada.



Stories of Mission: Living Faith

Read stories of people from Canada and around the world sharing God's love, hope, peace and justice with those around them. Each of the nine stories includes a scriptural reflection, discussion questions, hymn suggestions and a prayer. Share them in study groups, newsletters, sermons or on social media.

presbyterian.ca/stories-of-mission



The Presbyterian Church in Canada



MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

The Heavens are Telling the Glory of God



PHOTO CREDIT: THE REV. SHANNON BELL, CARIBOO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NAZKO, B.C.

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

God spoke and the wonder of creation emerged from chaos. All creatures great and small emerge from cosmic disorder and nothingness at God's word. The sun and moon and stars; stream and oceans; sage, goldenrod and trees; herons, moose and salmon; and finally, humans created in God's image. And God blesses each day of creation by enjoying its goodness.

But where God creates and builds, humans tend towards destruction and undoing to the extent that much of God's creation is being returned to chaos. God's abundant love spills over into creation and we are called to care for the earth even as the Creator has cared, protected and enhanced the

earth. More often than not, we have chosen to act in ways that have set the world on a course of destruction through denial, indifference, greed, cynicism and ignorance. In addition to being given the biblical mission to care for creation, we have been given, by faith, a covenant with God that includes all creation, the courage and responsibility to name things honestly, the humility to confess our sins and errors and the grace to turn in a new direction. These gifts uniquely position Christians to name the truth of what is happening to the world: not climate change or climate crisis, but climate violence. And to confess, as the Accra Confession (link) puts it, "our sin in misusing creation and failing to play our role as stewards and companions of nature."

We have heard and preached sermons that exhort us to be good

stewards in God's beloved creation. We have written, read and adopted reports at General Assembly that outline who the church and Christians are to be in relationship with creation. But knowing better has not meant that we have done better. In *The Long-Legged House*, Wendell Berry writes,

"We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong. We must change our lives so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption, that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it."

The church has an important role and responsibility to play in ending the violence against creation and ensuring we live in right relationship with it. And we have been given the hopeful and prophetic ministry to speak and act in fulfilment of our God-given mission to care for the world that God loved and for which Christ died.

Resources that help equip us for change and action for justice for creation:

- Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief (especially chapters 2 and 10): presbyterian.ca/living-faith
- Living in God's Mission Today by the Committee on Church Doctrine: presbyterian.ca/godsmission-today
- The Accra Confession (endorsed by the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in 2007)
- Ecological Justice information presbyterian.ca/ecologicaljustice

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The opinions expressed, books reviewed and activities undertaken by contributing writers reflect the broad diversity of experience and opinion in the church. Their inclusion in the newspaper is not necessarily an endorsement by The

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.

Presbyterian Church in Canada.

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CARING FOR CREATION

Joining God as Global Covenant-Partners



Enifa Masambelo and her grandmother sit on rubble of grandmother's home that was destroyed by the flooding from Cyclone Idai in Malawi. PHOTO CREDIT: CFGB/SHAYLYN MC-MAHON



Extensive flooding to a home after Cyclone Idai.

By the Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand, PCC International Ministries staff serving in theological education in Malawi

When I moved to Malawi (along with my family) as International Ministries staff with The Presbyterian Church in Canada to serve the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), we lived in a house the PCC owns that is built on land owned by the CCAP. This arrangement of owning the house but not the land is common in Malawi. The long-time gardener at the house, Thom, once came to me with a real-estate problem. He had

inherited a property but wanted to sell it so he could buy one closer to his home. Lots of difficulties ensued. My solution was to confirm who held title to the property, an idea foreign to Thom. Resolution came when the Village Headman, the leader designated for that area, stepped in. The village held title because, in Malawi, land is owned collectively but stewarded individually.

The opposite is true in Canada. I hold title to a property with a house on it. I can do what I want with the house and land provided I don't break the agreed upon restrictions. I

can sell it, mortgage it, live in it, rent it, or do whatever I want provided I don't break the covenant that I signed when purchasing it. That means no bright pink garage doors for me till 20 years after the initial sale. Not really a loss, I'm not a big fan of pink, for the benefit of owning my very own garage. Land is owned individually but stewarded collectively.

Neither of these arrangements combats climate change well because the climate is global not local. A village in Malawi can steward its land but that doesn't mean they can change the rain patterns or stop cyclones. Thom can tell you when the rainy seasons changed. It is subtle but significant and more and more unpredictable. By themselves, collective action by a village, even a country like Malawi, cannot change weather patterns. No matter how good they are as stewards, they are still powerless against climate change.

Here in Canada, I can make my local situation liveable but still continue to contribute to climate change. In my town, a petition went around to stop a new warehouse going in next to a residential area. One thousand transport trucks a day! Too much! Not in my backyard! Yet, the delivery trucks that circle my neighbourhood, bringing goods purchased online and produced in far-flung places need to get loaded somewhere. We can't

connect the 1000 transport trucks with our online shopping patterns because we focus on our little piece of land and what is good for it. When I am a good steward of my land, I unintentionally harm yours.

For the past few decades, Christians have used the image of a "steward" to help think about environmental ethics. Based on Genesis 1–3, where God gives humans responsibility to tend to the earth, this ethic has focused on the human-creation relationship. I steward this place that God gives me. The shortcoming to this image though is that I can be a good steward of my place and still not be able to stop climate change. "Think globally, act locally" doesn't lead to a better world. It leads to bet-

ter villages or backyards.

I wonder whether another image from Genesis 1-3 might help. God joins humans as covenant-partners. In turn, humans relate to each other as covenant-partners. There is a constant refrain running through the Old Testament that finds full articulation in the New when Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:36–40). Loving God and loving your neighbour intertwine. We sometimes call this the double love ethic, but I prefer the term covenantpartner ethic.

Environmentalists have asked us to love the earth by being stewards. The assumption is that if we steward our small part, act locally, then the whole will be better off, think globally. This has not happened in relation to climate change and, in fact, this focus on our local part might actually distract us from the larger global problem. I wonder if we need to focus on loving one another?

If I love Thom, then I will change my actions. But love only happens when I see and hear and serve another person. Love needs a partner. If I never meet another person, like Thom, then my love stays abstract. It is easier to love the idea of another human than to actually love a person. The image of covenant-partner is something that Christians offer to the environmental cause. We claim to be brothers and sisters, covenant-partners, with people all around the world. We seek solidarity with others in a relationship or in a covenant-partnership with God, not in a problem like climate change. The key question becomes, "How are we, as individuals and as a church, forging real covenant-partnerships with God and our people worldwide?" Once we answer that, we move toward solutions for our common environmental problems.



While international mission staff returned home at the start of the pandemic, Presbyterians Sharing continues to support Blair Bertrand as he carries on with his work from Canada in his role as Malawi Liaison with the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Blantyre Synod.

Protecting God's Creation:

CARING FOR CREATION

By Brian Merrett, Montreal photographer and elder, the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal and member of the PWS&D committee. In 1970, Brian designed and illustrated the geodesic EcoDome, a travelling information booth for STOP, Montreal's Society to Overcome Pollution, ©2004.

In 1973, acting on the recommendation of the 98th annual General Assembly of the previous year in a move to address the then nascent awareness of environmental issues, the Board of Evangelism and Social Action of The Presbyterian Church in Canada prepared two papers. One was A Theology of Ecology, the other, A Policy Statement on Ecology. Generally based on UN guidelines established at the Stockholm Convention of 1972 and updated over the next couple of decades, they are, in themselves, good documents. But the question should be asked: Were the findings and principles disseminated to the country's pulpits and Sunday Schools? If they had been, perhaps Canada would not have become the world leader in per-capita garbage production.i

Where does the environment figure in the agenda of meaningful issues for the church today, given that it is challenged on numerous fronts? While the topics of dwindling attendance, homosexuality and same-sex marriages are important to contemporary church life, in the bigger picture, they might be secondary concerns when compared to the survival of human life on the planet. Could the environment have relevance in contemporary worship? Could we find significance in the teachings of Jesus on another level?

Our environmental actions and responses seem to be at the whim of interest groups and big business. We seem to be caught in the midst of confusing arguments about what we could be doing to protect the environment. We are manipulated by hearsay and emotion. An example: We are told that we shouldn't eat certain

Where is the Church? soy products because the rainforests were destroyed to make way for soy-

bean plantations. Another voice says that the rainforests are new things,

planted not that long ago as refor-

estation projects. If we have no idea what our way of life is doing to the Earth, if we think that we can continue to greedily take what we call resources from the land and return wastes in their stead, then we had better be forewarned that the Earth could reply to our negligence in the most overwhelming fashion. She could easily wipe us from her face and go about renewing herself the way she began-over eons of evolution. Some ecologists have all but given up on finding a solution to our behaviour; they say that we have

passed the point of no return. Consider these four statements.

- Environmental issues seem to be too huge, too overpowering, for the average person to be able to comprehend and act upon.
- Personal addiction to greed, excess and individual selfimportance seem to dominate the media, popular culture and the actions of big business and governments.
- Family cohesiveness is reaching a new low as North American youth find their "values" on television, the Internet and in shopping malls, rather than from multiple generations at the dining-room table and in the community of Christ.
- Organized religion seems to be alienating more people than it is attracting, while more people seem to be searching for their spirituality.

These seemingly unrelated facts of North American life are real, present and very linked to each other. Wouldn't it be a revelation to hope that we could bring a new togetherness to today's troubled families as we learn about God's plan for Earth and our place on it, all the while turning our actions into positive steps to save the planet? By reaching young and questioning 21st-century minds with tangible guidance on issues that have immediate relevance, we are taking the first steps in introducing to our youth the rest of the teachings of Jesus.

In his book, The Machinery of Nature," Paul Ehrlich says, "I am convinced that such a quasi-religious movement, one concerned with the

need to change the values that now govern much of human activity, is essential to the persistence of our civilization." The "such" refers to the Deep Ecology movement that was also born out of the 1972 Stockholm Convention. Its proponent, Arne Naess, sought to dispel the idealistic notion that by just fighting pollution and resource depletion (i.e., "shallow ecology"), all our environmental problems would be overcome. Naess felt that, "Today's human thought patterns and social organization are inadequate to deal with the population/resource/environment crisis."

It's true. What is needed is a movement that will teach all of Earth's guests that we have been invited to the table to join in the bounty, but also that our duty is to return the table to the way it was before we sat down. This movement may already be defined in the teachings of the Bible. Its teachings can be applied to all of creation and not simply to humanity. It could be that no other source of information on Earth has such credibility.

And it must be adapted to current conditions. This is not to say we must change our church to fit the times, but currently, Love Thy Neighbour extends to me planting genetically modified feed corn far enough from my fence line so as not to contaminate the organic sweet corn growing in my neighbour's fields.

Consider this:

In The Greening of Religion by Roderick Nashiii, the author quotes medieval historian Lynn White. "God planned all of this explicitly for man's [sic] benefit and rule; no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's [sic] purposes... Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen." White states that Jews and Christians traditionally believed that the rest of creation existed solely for human benefit.

(White also suggests that Saint Francis of Assisi [1182-1226] be appointed "a patron saint for ecologists." White calls Saint Francis "the greatest spiritual revolutionary in Western history" because of his forthright challenge to Christian anthropocentrism.)

And this:

In Liberating Life: A Report to the World Council of Churchesiv under the heading A Theology for the Liberation of Life, it states, "It is now our



"Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away" (Hosea 4:3 NIV).

opportunity and our duty, by God's grace, to be restored to peace and justice both in our relations to one another and in our relations with the rest of creation... Only a society ordered to the regeneration of the earth will attain peace and justice.

"Within the message of Jesus we find a profound deepening of the importance of our treatment of one another and especially of the weak and oppressed. 'Truly, I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:40). Primarily this refers to our treatment of human beings but on the lips of Jesus, who speaks of God's care for the grass of the field and the fallen sparrow, these too are included among 'the least of these.'

"Without constant attention to the latest developments in the sciences, Christian theology will become irrelevant to those who strive to preserve peace, justice, and the integrity of creation."

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it FOOTNOTES and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15).

We read in Genesis how God exhorts humanity to rule over or have dominion over the Earth. Let us understand that to mean, "have stewardship over," just as a responsible steward does not squander the treasure that is in his or her control neither should we squander the Earth. It bears considering that we ask ourselves at the end of each day not only how we have served the Lord that day but how we have helped to safeguard and heal God's creation.

"Lord, thy call we answer.

Take us in thy care.

Train us in thy garden

in thy work to share."

(The Presbyterian Church in Canada, hymn 370)

Human greed is destroying our planet. In the 12 chapters of the Gospel of Luke Jesus gives us the Parable of the Rich Fool who builds bigger barns in which to hoard worldly treasure. Jesus warns us, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."

The church must take a leadership position in environmental issues. It would be easier to go with the flow and deny the problem, but going with the flow is reserved for things that are dead. To be alive, to quote Chesterton, is to fight upstream. To not fight the flow could deny not only the church but humanity itself a future.

- i. Statistics Canada Canadians now produce over 21 million tonnes of waste per year.
- ii. Paul Ehrlich, The Machinery of Nature (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986)
- iii. As quoted in Roger S. Gottlieb This Sacred Earth / Religion, Nature, Environment (London: Routledge, 1996.)
- iv. 1991 General Assembly in Canberra whose theme was "Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation"



LEADERSHIP



Rani Ibrahim and his mother, Dunia, receiving their Canadian citizenship papers.

By Emily Hill, Canadian Ministries

"Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love" is beautifully inscribed in Arabic on a hand-crafted, heart-shaped wood decoration that a newcomer to Canada gave to Rani Ibrahim. Rani was delighted, but not surprised, to see this verse from 1 John 4:8 on a gift given to him by someone who is not Christian.

Rani explained, "I shared this verse with him as we talked about our

Essential Support to Newcomers

countries of origin and our problems. I respect his faith and culture, and he does the same for me. By sharing the verse, I was showing him my love. He was doing the same by giving me this gift."

Building genuine relationships by sharing the love of God through respect, care and generosity is at the heart of the Newcomers Mission, a ministry of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Peterborough, Ont. that receives a grant from the PCC, which Rani leads as a lay missionary.

Before the pandemic, the relationship-building in this growing newcomer ministry happened in person. Rani and other leaders in the ministry met people at Tim Hortons for coffee, visited them in their homes and ran weekly programs to help newcomers settle into life in Canada. With physical distancing measures in place, Rani and his mother—a key volunteer in the ministry—have continued to connect with people through phone calls, social media, text messages, "WhatsApp" (a popular messaging tool used by many newcomers), Zoom and outdoor visits when it has been safe to do so.

"During hard times, we reach out to them," Rani explained, "then they are comfortable reaching out to us when they need support." Recently, a Syrian family called Rani at 10:30 p.m. because their daughter was sick, and they did not understand the emergency room doctor's diagnosis. Rani translated what the doctor was saying over the phone and helped the parents to feel confident in the doctor's treatment. "I told them that we were going to be praying for their daughter," Rani recounted, "and, the last time we talked, her parents told me that the girl was doing very well."

The image from scripture that Rani sees as representing this ministry is that of God as a mother bird whose wings act as a refuge for people, from Psalm 91:4. The Newcomers

Mission aims to provide two wings of refuge: social/cultural support (ESL, translation, and family, youth and men's programming) and spiritual support (prayer meetings, Arabic worship services, and fellowship). Rani explains that, "The two wings must work together in the context of relationships so that the newcomers can thrive." He further explained, "A dove's feathers are soft, like God's love. We help people to get driver's licenses, find jobs, pay taxes, obtain housing and access health care so that God's promise of security and comfort will be made real in their lives."

The man who gave Rani the heartshaped decoration was someone that Rani had helped to find a job. His job is with another member of the church. In August, the three of them met up for a visit. The newcomer told them he is happy with his new job and expressed interest in coming to their Arabic worship service. Rani marvelled at the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit. God had, indeed, placed this man and many others in the Newcomers Mission under his wings.

Rani Ibrahim is a participant in Cyclical PCC, a church-planting support initiative within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Through Cyclical PCC he receives training, coaching and peer support to assist him grow his ministry. For more information about Cyclical, please visit presbyterian.ca/cyclicalpcc.



The Newcomers
Ministry at St. Paul's
receives support from
Presbyterians Sharing.

262 Years Young in Québec City



 $\label{thm:conditional} \textbf{The original sanctuary at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Qu\'ebec City. } \\$

By Gina Farnell, Clerk of Session, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Québec City, Que.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Québec City, Que., became a congregation in the 18th century, grew and became prosperous in the 19th century, struggled around the end of the 20th century and is now stepping right into the 21st century.

Like many other Presbyterian congregations across Canada, congregations in Québec City inherited huge buildings. In our case, we had three: a church building that can sit over 400 people comfortably, a five-bed-

room manse with a living room large enough to house a baby grand piano, and a Kirk Hall perfect for holding community events. All this was to be financially supported by a congregation of 30 active members. Added to this is the fact that these buildings are situated in the heart of the very historical Old Québec. This has brought its fair share of restrictions and red tape.

We were blessed with an endowment fund. Our predecessors loved their church and wanted to ensure its longevity. But even a solid endowment fund could not keep up with the operational expenses of three buildings. Sadly, concerns expressed at the an-

nual congregational meetings centred more around the cost of heating the manse and the state of the Kirk Hall roof than our contribution to Presbyterians Sharing. We felt that we were in survival mode. Our members gave it their best to bring financial stability to our community: international suppers, special drives, letters sent expressing our need for support. We were three years from financial insolvency when an answer to our prayers seemed within reach. Instead of us taking care of our buildings, why could it not be our buildings taking care of us? What we considered a burden became an asset.

We struck an agreement with Kamaï Événements, an event organization company. Through this partnership, St. Andrew's church has gained assured longevity and stability. We remain owners of the buildings and Kamaï Événements is now the operator. The congregation will still meet for its Sunday morning worship in the church building and special events on our Christian calendar. Our community groups will still be provided with space for their weekly meetings.

When we do not need it, the church building is to serve as a conference venue, cultural or business events hall, or special social gathering room, operated by Kamaï. The manse is now two high-end apartments and has modern meeting room space in the basement. The Kirk Hall is to be an apartment large

enough to house a family of five (which is difficult to find in Old Québec) and provide space for our church school and church offices. The business deal provides the needed income to cover all the congregation's expenses. Session and Board members have vowed that every penny put in the collection plates on Sunday mornings will go to Christian outreach and not plumbing.

This did not happen overnight. The congregation had to give up its familiar sanctuary with old wooden panels and pews, where many generations sang and prayed. We mourned the comfortable old ways to embrace a new environment. We kept on reminding ourselves that we were not a museum in an historical building but a congregation with a mission.

Both the congregation at St. Andrew's and staff at Kamaï had to be flexible. At first, the manse was to be rented as office space: COVID-19 changed that. The church building was already booked for events to be held in 2020—COVID 19 changed that, too. We are still not out of the woods. All the work done on the buildings was expensive. It is not quite completed as COVID-19 slowed everything down. We hope to be able to hold our first worship service in the new interior of our church building soon-if COV-ID-19 does not prevent it. Stay tuned, we will let you know when the official opening takes place.

It has been quite a journey.







Sketches of what the inside of the building will look like when construction is finished.

LEADERSHIP

Rethinking How We Gather

By the Rev. Meg Patterson, St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., on The Art of Gathering online conference

When I heard about the one-day conference called The Art of Gathering that the Life and Mission Agency was hosting, I was intrigued. Like many people during the pandemic, I had been yearning for quality learning opportunities. I was surprised when I looked up the keynote speaker's name and found out that he was the host of one of my favourite podcasts, "Harry Potter and the Sacred Text." Casper ter Kuile is not only the host of this popular podcast but also a Ministry Innovation Fellow at Harvard Divinity School and author of The Power of Ritual and How We Gather. I signed up for the conference when I realized that it had the potential to be both personally and professionally beneficial. I am so glad I made that decision.

What Casper presented was quite different from what I expected. His approach to gathering people focused on the way that people who are not connected to faith communities come together. For many decades, there has been a growing number of people who select "none" to describe their religious affiliation. Yet, as Casper pointed out to us, the need for connection and meaning still exists. So, where are the "nones" finding communities of purpose and belonging? Casper's research has revealed that they are gathering in

places like CrossFit and SoulCycle gyms, Maker Spaces (shared art and design studios) and other intentional communities built on common interests and experience (e.g., grief, outdoor adventure, social justice and popular culture).

"The human longings that have pulled us toward Christian community still exist," Casper said at the online conference, "but the distribution systems we have are becoming obsolete." At first, this statement was a shock, but, as I listened to Casper further, I realized that we were being invited to rethink the ways that church communities share the Good News of Jesus.

Casper offered two key pieces of advice for congregations. First, he suggests that we "unbundle and deliver gifts." Christian communities are used to offering many different opportunities to gather and support (e.g., worship, outreach, fellowship, education for all ages, family support, pastoral care, etc.). "Unbundling" means selecting one aspect of Christian faith practice—one that your congregation is good at, enjoys and feels called by God to pursue—and making it the focus of your ministry. He provided the example of One Table, a Jewish organization that recognized that millennials needed rest and community. So, One Table started a Friday sabbath dinner that offers ideas, resources and support



over food.

The second strategy that Casper suggested is to "come alongside" those in our neighbourhoods who are already gathering people together and offer our support. Church communities have years of experience in spiritual accompaniment, community building, pastoral care, group dynamics, interpretation...and have so many other skills and gifts to offer. "Coming alongside" is not a way to get new people to come to church on Sunday, but to build relationships with neighbours and to contribute to the well-being of the communities of which our churches are a part.

There are three things that appeal to me about Casper's teachings: 1)

They do not depend on the size or budget of your congregation. 2) They are based on our God-given gifts in our own context. We are working out of our strengths, not trying to build something from nothing. 3) It resembles what Jesus and the early church had done. Even though people came to Jesus, he also went to them and invited them into relationship no matter where he found them.

The most encouraging part of Casper's proposal is that people are still longing for the things that Jesus offers: personal and social transformation, purpose and accountability, an outlet for their creativity and a sense of community. It is up to the people of God to show our neigh-

bours that when Jesus is at the heart of gatherings that our hearts' longings can be fulfilled.

Having participated in two educational programs offered by The Presbyterian Church in Canada— Presbyterians Read and The Art of Gathering—I am grateful for the opportunity to hear from other voices to give us a new perspective, whether it is Jewish author and professor Amy-Jill Levine through Presbyterians Read, or someone like Casper through the Cyclical PCC event. Even when I disagree with some of what I hear, I am always thinking, turning to scripture, all the while optimistic that the experience will make me a better follower of Jesus.



in study and service on the west coast - rlockhart@standrews.edu





Presbyterian Theological College Graduates

Congratulations to the 2021 graduates of the three Presbyterian colleges.

The colleges of the church prepare new ministers and scholars for the work of ministry and the strengthening of the body of Christ.

KNOX COLLEGE



Cecilia Appiah-AgyeiMaster of Divinity and the
Diploma of the College



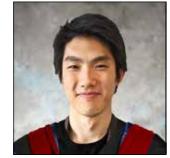
Candice Leah Shivana Bahadoor Master of Divinity and the Diploma of the College



In Kyu ChoMaster of Divinity



Gerald Leo Gallant
Master of Divinity and the
Diploma of the College



Joshua Heo
Master of Divinity and
the Sangjoon Hall of
Theology Certificate



Thomas S. Mason Master of Divinity and the General Assembly Certificate



Mark Oteng Master of Divinity and the Diploma of the College



Eun Oae Koh

Master of Divinity and Master
of Religious Education and the
Diploma of the College



Grace Kan Cheung Master of Pastoral Studies



Loys de Fleuriot de la Colinière Master of Pastoral Studies



Jessica Theresa
Jinjoo Lee
Master of Pastoral Studies



David Mikael Ramkhelawan Master of Pastoral Studies



Clement Thau Hau Shim Master of Pastoral Studies



Antonio Siracusa
Master of Pastoral Studies



Perry Ho Fai So Master of Pastoral Studies



Jonathon Brendon Zarb Master of Pastoral Studies



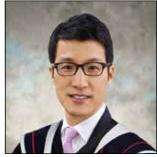
Hyeon Joo (Karen) KimMaster of Theological Studies



Mirim Kim
Master of Theological Studies



Anne McGillivray
Master of Theological Studies



Dong-Jin Park Master of Arts



Konnie Jane Vissers
Master of Theology



Jonathan Mark Schmidt
Doctor of Ministry



Hyunjun (David) Bae Doctor of Philosophy



Sarah Yoo-Han Doctor of Philosophy

KNOX COLLEGE PHOTOS CREDIT: CANGRAD STUDIOS

Learn more about the colleges:

The Presbyterian College presbyterian college.ca

Knox College *knox.utoronto.ca*

St. Andrew's Hall standrews.edu

Vancouver School of Theology *vst.edu*



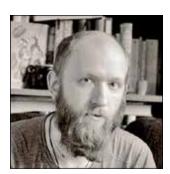
VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY/ST. ANDREW'S HALL



Sungil Lee Master in Theological Studies



Daniel Surva Master in Theological Studies



Justin Thurn Master in Theological Studies



Gabrelia Astrid Melatunan Master in Public and Pastoral Leadership



Arthur Surjadi Master in Public and Pastoral Leadership



Brigida Karren Tin Master in Public and Pastoral Leadership

PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE



Angelina Kulanathan Master of Divinity



Enoch Lee Master of Divinity Diploma of the College



Charles Lewis Master of Divinity



Rev. Theresia Ndofor Master of Divinity

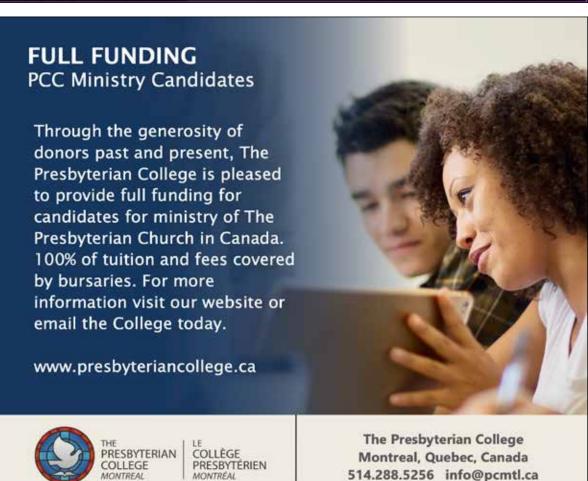




Knox College, Presbyterian College and Vancouver School of Theology/St. Andrew's Hall receive support from Presbyterians Sharing.

The Lord continues his ministry in and through the church. All Christians are called to participate in the ministry of Christ. As his body on earth we all have gifts to use in the church and in the world to the glory of Christ, our King and Head.

Living Faith, 7.2.1



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COLLEGE



RECOGNITION



George Forsyth, a charter member of Westminster-St.-Paul's, has served as an elder for 56 years.

By Margaret Burnett, Office Administrator at Westminster –St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Guelph, Ont.

George Forsyth was only 24 years old when he was nominated to serve as an elder at the new Westminster-St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Guelph, Ont., in 1965.

The church had opened in 1958, a plant from the two downtown Presbyterian churches, to serve the growing east end of the city. A charter member, George quickly became involved in a Scouts group and the Presbyterian Young People's Society. He soon joined the choir and was then appointed to the Board of Managers in 1964. George recalls that the decision to commit to becoming an elder was not an easy one. His father,

Elders in Guelph Serve Over 50 Years

George, Sr., was already serving on Session, so he understood the commitment.

"I did realize that it was a lifetime commitment and a serious decision," said George, "and I was just 24 and involved with Young People's." However, a nudge from then-minister, the Rev. Gordon Hastings, tipped the scale. George recalls the Rev. Hastings advising, "I think you should," and so he did, being ordained in 1965! Fifty-six years on, without a break, George continues to serve the congregation of Westminster-St. Paul's.

For Bob Renton, who became an elder in 1967, he was following a long family history of service to the Presbyterian church. Growing up in Amos Church in Dromore, Ont., Bob had witnessed his grandfather's many years of dedication in numerous roles, including that of elder. Others within the extended family were ministers or held other leadership roles within the Presbyterian church. When Bob moved to Guelph as a young teacher, the new Westminster-St. Paul's church was the one closest to home. He and wife, Eileen, joined in 1962, and by 1967, he was ordained as an elder. A few years later, in 1973, Bob was asked to temporarily take on the role of Clerk of Session. In 2021, Bob continues his commitment of service as both an elder and Clerk of Session, having logged 54 years since his ordination.

While the present Westminster-St. Paul's congregation is shrinking, both men remember the church bursting at the seams with over 200 children in Sunday School in the early years. Many concerts and pageants were presented to a full house. However, over the years, the children from the '60s and '70s have grown up and many have left the church, the city or both. The two men expressed sadness that this has happened but acknowledged that it is an all-too-familiar story, not only within the Presbyterian church but across many faith groups.

However, large congregation or small, the role of the elder remains an important one. Both Bob and George remain committed to serving, being an example of Christian leadership and supporting those under their care. This can be a challenge, especially when people open up about

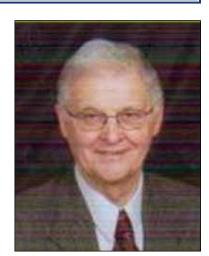
personal issues and look to their elder for guidance.

"People will tell you things that are absolutely confidential," said Bob. This must be respected and is one of the challenges. Inevitable issues or conflicts within a congregation also require diplomacy and confidentiality.

Westminster-St. Paul's adopted "term eldership" in the early 2000s and both men agreed that it has challenges. George noted that one drawback is continuity in relationships when elders step down from an active role. People develop a relationship with their elder and find it difficult to establish a bond with a new person.

For George, visiting families in his district has been the most rewarding experience of his work as an elder. He has enjoyed every relationship he has established over the years.

One job both men agreed can be onerous is representing the church at presbytery. These two men have been mainstays at the Waterloo-Wellington presbytery as representative elders. While committee work is to be expected, Bob recalls hours and hours spent at special meetings dealing with issues that arise within



Bob Renton has served as an elder for 54 years and Clerk of Session for 48.

the presbytery. However, both he and George have given generously to the work of the presbytery and The Presbyterian Church in Canada, including attending General Assembly over numerous years and locations.

As it seems likely that the Westminster-St. Paul's congregation will soon have to amalgamate with other churches in Guelph, both elders expressed how rewarding the many years they have dedicated to the role of elder have been. However, both are now willing to relax and they agreed that they do not want to be an active elder in the amalgamated congregations.

Every organization needs renewal and, as Bob observed about the beginning of his service, "The church needs new, young elders."

Well done, good and faithful servants

COMMITTEES

Pension and Benefits Board

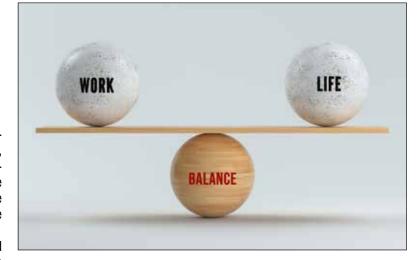
By the Pension and Benefits Department

The Pension and Benefits Board oversees the administration of The Presbyterian Church in Canada's defined benefit pension plan and comprehensive group benefits program available to actively working and retired members of the church.

The Pension and Benefit Board is made up of Presbyterians nominated to the Board by the General Assembly who have professional experience and expertise in disciplines relevant to the field of pension and benefits. Board members have experience as

financial advisers, accountants, actuaries, human resource professionals, defined benefit pension professionals and group benefits and insurance consultants. There are a total of nine members serving the board and three ex-officio members.

The Pension and Benefits Board meets twice a year (usually in March and October) and also periodically throughout the year as needed. At these meetings, the Board receives detailed financial, investment and actuarial advice from the Chief Financial Officer, the Trustee Board and our Actuaries. Additionally, the Board receives reports from the



three subcommittees that work to ensure support for the work assigned to the Board.

The Technical Committee reviews issues specific to the pension plan, its regulatory requirements and member and/or congregational queries. The Group Benefits Committee

reviews coverage under the group benefits plan and its related policies and financial agreements. The Communications Committee confirms how plan members, beneficiaries and congregations receive appropriate and timely information about the pension and benefit plans.

The staff of the pension and benefits office offer support to active and retired members with inquiries about Health and Dental benefits through Sun Life Financial and the pension plan. The office also provides resources and webinars through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to promote a healthy work-life balance.

Over the past few years, the office has introduced and promoted the Automatic Withdrawal Program to provide ease to treasurers with their monthly remittances. The program has seen great success and continues to be a beneficial tool, particularly considering the challenges many of us face because of the pandemic. We continue to offer the program to all congregations to provide ease of administration and peace of mind to those responsible for the monthly remittances.



PRESBYTERIANS SHARING

Sharing Hope



The Rev. Dr. Paul McLean, pictured with members of the Tayal team, works with translation teams to translate the Bible into Indigenous languages.

By Karen Plater, Associate Secretary, Stewardship & Planned Giving

Presbyterians Sharing is about the mission and ministry we do together as a denomination. Congregations collaborate on a wide range of ministry initiatives through prayer, funds and advocacy. We determine what to do together by considering recommendations that committees bring to General Assembly for discernment. Additionally, the General Assembly receives a budget, which we call Presbyterians Sharing, to help facilitate many of the decisions that are made. Committee members and denomination staff work alongside congregations, presbyteries and church members to bring the decisions to life.

We trust that the Holy Spirit inspires the church's discernment and its decision-making. Delegates to General Assembly pray, listen, question and discuss issues that have circulated through congregations, presbyteries and national committees during the year. Recommendations are sometimes revised through amendments before they are voted on. Many recommendations are adopted with strong agreement, some are defeated, while others require votes to be counted. Individuals might not agree with decisions, or understand why they were made, but we believe that God is moving the church to action.

The past two years have been

challenging times as congregations have grappled with questions, fears and hopes as the church has considered the proposals (remits) accepted at the 2019 General Assembly regarding issues of sexuality and marriage and ordination. Some have questioned Assembly Council's decision to use reserved funds (separate from the Presbyterians Sharing annual budget) to hire a staff person to help congregations welcome and include people identifying as LGBTQI2+. That action was made in response to many decisions made at past General Assemblies, unrelated to the current remits. During this process, some have decided to withdraw financial support until the issues are resolved, while others have continued to support Presbyterians Sharing, regardless of their feelings and thoughts about specific decisions the church has made.

Through all of this, Presbyterian ministries and congregations have remained steadfast in participating in God's mission to their communities, our country and the world. And, through all of this, we have continued to share hope through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing.

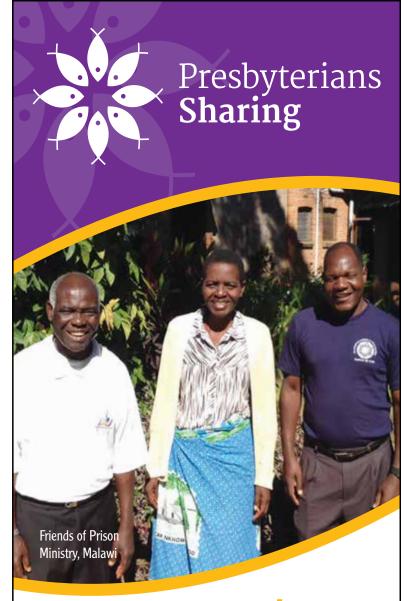
Mission staff working from Canada and grants sent across borders are helping international partners continue their ministries. Congregations and ministries have adapted and grown outreach programs in Canada. The first online General Assembly took place, connecting us again in worship, prayer and decision-making.

We shared hope with an elderly woman in Taiwan, who was finally able to read the Bible in her own language. We shared hope with an exhausted single parent in Montreal who attended a workshop on self-care. We shared hope when a hot meal was prepared and served to a young man taking refuge from the bitter cold in Saskatoon. We shared hope when a family in rural Romania received social and educational support.

We don't know what the future holds, but we know that even in changing and challenging times God's love never wavers. And we know that sharing hope makes a difference.



Montreal West Presbyterian Church initiated a food drive and prepared food baskets for people in need of basic necessities as a result of COVID-19.



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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Sleeping While the Kingdom Comes

By the Rev. Amanda Currie, former moderator, and minister at First Presbyterian Church in Regina, Sask.

As my extended term as moderator comes to an end, I must admit that I'm feeling pretty tired. I remember one former moderator telling me that after his term ended, he and his wife went on a great trip to celebrate and relax. Due to the ongoing COVID situation, travel is not likely for me, but I'm looking forward to a good rest.

After the last year and a half, I don't think I'm the only PCC minister who could really use some downtime this summer, some good rest and a lot of extra sleep. If you were thinking that you'd hold on until the pandemic is completely resolved and then take a holiday, please don't try to do that. It's not a good plan.

If you need some biblical backing for taking a holiday, just think of the commandment to keep the sabbath. Or remember Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Or if you're following the lectionary this month, pay close attention to the gospel text for June 13 (Mark 4:26–34).

The well-known parable in the passage is the one about the Reign of God being like a mustard seed. It looks tiny and insignificant at first, like it couldn't make a difference in the world. But when it is planted in the ground, it grows. It grows and grows into a big tree with large branches, and it becomes a safe haven for all the birds of the air.

I know you've heard that parable many times before. The folks

at Presbyterian World Service & Development love to use it for PWS&D-themed Sundays. It reminds us that tiny gifts can grow into something with a big impact, bringing help and hope to people in crisis in faraway lands. It reminds us that individuals and little congregations, often with few resources, can make a difference when they give generously from what they have.

The main message we tend to pick up about the mustard seed is that God can do great things with our small contributions. And that usually leads to the conclusion that we'd better start making some small contributions. Give some money. Volunteer some time. Make an effort to pray. Pitch in and help somehow. It's not up to us to do it all, but we are called to do something for sure!

But there's another parable in the passage that often gets overlooked: Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how." Yes, the gardener goes to sleep.

Just think about the alternative. That would be a gardener who works day and night without any rest. She doesn't leave her garden. She hovers over the seeds and the sprouting plants. She worries over the weather and frets over the wildlife around that could potentially interrupt the growing process.

Some people say that talking to your plants can help them to grow, but too much attention can actually backfire in many cases. Like when some of us overwater our plants or

fiddle around so much with the soil and the leaves and the stalks that we actually cause them damage. It reminds me of the figurative "watched pot" that will not boil. Or it's like a soufflé that falls because you keep opening the oven door to check on it. The message for us today could be: "Leave it alone and take a rest. It'll be okay."

Those among us who are students may relate to the temptation to keep studying through the night. You've got a big exam in the morning, and an all-nighter seems like the only way to cram all that information into your head. But former students know that it rarely works. Study hard. Stay up late if you need to. But then go to bed. Sleep. Let your mind rest. And you'll have a much better chance of success in the morning.

I'm pretty sure the same thing applies to our ministries in the church. After the hectic pace of the last two years, I need a good rest this summer. After ministering through more than a year of pandemic, I expect that you do also. Take to heart the good news that, once you scatter the seed that you have been given, you are welcome to go to bed at night.

There's a certain amount of trust involved in going to sleep. You're not going to accomplish a lot of tasks while you're asleep. You won't be able to control what happens while you're unconscious. You'll have to let go and let God.

When it comes to gardening, you have to trust that there won't be frost, and that rain will fall and that the sun will rise in the morning. Your job's not done yet, because harvest-time will come. But in between, you'll have to



trust that the plants will grow without you supervising and micro-managing their progress. We need to trust God about our ministries, too. We do our best to scatter seeds, and then we rest. We trust that God will produce the growth, and we prepare ourselves for the next phase of our work.

As always, we can take Jesus as our example and guide, following his lead in ministering to God's people. Remember Jesus' busy ministry? Remember the crowds and the people seeking healing? He worked hard and had long days, but then he rested. He snuck away to solitary places to pray and be renewed in strength. He ate food and laughed with his friends. He accepted the care of a woman friend who anointed him with costly perfume.

And did you notice that Jesus didn't get all his work done? You thought you were the only one! They lined up at his door, looking for healing, and he helped as many as he could. But there would always be more sick people to heal, more lonely people to befriend, more outcasts to welcome, more confused people to teach, more proud people to correct. And the offer of salvation to all people, the promise of God's Reign being made complete, did not come

through the tireless efforts of the earthly Jesus. It was accomplished by God, somewhat mysteriously, and certainly unexpectedly, while Jesus slept.

In the course of his ministry, Jesus scattered a lot of seeds. Seeds of healing, seeds of teaching, seeds of mercy, gracious welcoming and loving. But when he was rejected, betrayed and denied, he didn't keep on fighting the good fight. He gave up his life, he died and was buried. Like a seed being planted in the ground. And that's when God did the amazing thing that extended God's grace to all people. While Jesus slept, God raised him up to live again!

He was like a plant growing up from a tiny seed to become the tallest tree with big leafy branches, creating a resting place for all the birds, offering healing, teaching justice, proclaiming and enacting God's gracious love and welcome not just to some people, but to all the people in every time and place. And we are among those people. We are among those figurative birds who are given a home and a resting place among the big leafy branches of the tree that is God's kingdom coming on earth. We are invited to trust God, and to rest there awhile.

Cutting Edge of Mission Award Recipient:

Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking



The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking.

Le centre canadien pour mettre fin à la traite des personnes. Each year at General Assembly, an award is given to recognize a person or group for their work on the cutting edge of mission. The year's recipient of the Cutting Edge of Mission Award is the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking.

Julia Drydyk, Executive Director, received the award on behalf of the Centre and gave a brief introduction to the organization's work. She explained

that human trafficking in Canada is occurring at shocking levels. It is a low-risk, high-reward manipulative crime that demands sophisticated, coordinated and integrated solutions.

Established in 2016, the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking was created to demand a national strategy for change by collaborating with various stakeholders—including all levels of government, private sector

organizations and front-line service providers—in order to advance best practices and to best serve victims and survivors of this crime.

In 2019, the Centre launched the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline to provide an avenue for victims and survivors to receive the trauma-informed specialized support that they need and for community members to report incidents of suspected hu-

man trafficking. The Centre continues to work with Canadian law enforcement agencies to develop referral and reporting protocols that are part of the anti-trafficking response network used by Hotline Response Advocates when assisting victims and survivors.

To learn more about the Cutting Edge of Mission Award, including past recipients, visit presbyterian.ca/cutting-edge.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Gathering Online for GA

By Barb Summers, Communications Office

The 2021 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada was held online from June 6–9, 2021. Opening worship was led by the Rev. Amanda Currie, Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly. (The 2020 General Assembly was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.) During the first session, the Rev. Dr. Daniel Scott, minister at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford, Ont., was installed as the new moderator.

Indigenous Ministry

This year's Assembly opened with acknowledging the tragic discovery of the remains of 215 children at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. The moderator led the Assembly in a time of prayer, lament, confession and silence to honour the lives of the children and all those affected by the ongoing harm of Indian Residential Schools. Watch the video available at presbyterian.ca/moment-of-silence. (For more information, see page 16.)

The Assembly directed the moderator and immediate past-moderator to write a statement and pastoral letter, in consultation with the National Indigenous Ministries Council, responding to the discovery of the remains. The unusual action of two moderators writing a letter underscored the importance of continuing to speak up and act for healing and reconciliation. The Rev. Amanda Currie noted that there will be more moments like this, so we need to continue to journey with Indigenous people on healing and reconciliation efforts. "Difficult but important work is needed...Our speech needs to follow with action."

During Assembly, commissioners approved a motion making the National Indigenous Ministry Council a standing committee of the General Assembly. In the future, the Life and Mission Agency Committee will also have a member, appointed by the National Indigenous Ministry Council, to help the church better walk in new ways with Indigenous people.

Letter of Condolence

In light of the attack against a Muslim family in London, Ont., on Sunday, June 6, and understanding it to be a visible sign of underlying evil, the moderator will write to the National Muslim-Christian Liaison Committee offering condolence and encouraging the committee's ongoing dialogue and work.

Recognizing that we have not spoken up against all acts of racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, genderbased violence, homophobia, and transphobia within and outside of our own church, all levels of the church are encouraged to actively and deliberately reach out to build communities that are life-giving and liberating for all through dialogue and community work.

Definition of Marriage and Ordination of LGBTQI People

After years of prayerful study and discussion, The Presbyterian Church in Canada made changes to its theology and practice regarding marriage, providing the option for people to choose to define marriage as either as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or a covenant relationship between two adult people. These decisions provide Presbyterian ministers with liberty of conscious and the freedom to choose to officiate or not officiate at the marriages of same-sex couples.

Additionally, the church agreed that LGBTQI people (whether married or single) can be ordained and are welcome to serve as ministers and ruling elders.

These decisions accompany other resolutions about policies and programs that will help the church include LGBTQI people more fully in all aspects of ministry. The church will also prepare a confession to all individuals and congregations that have been harmed by the church's exclusion of LGBTQI.

Rainbow Communion

The Special Listening Committee re. LGBTQI, also known as Rainbow Communion, was established by the General Assembly in 2017 to respond to the call to repent of the harm caused by homophobia and hypocrisy in the church.

During General Assembly, the moderator acknowledged the courage of those who took time to share their experiences. He expressed pain in knowing that this kind of hurt took place in our church and pointed out the need for a journey of healing both for our church and for those who have been harmed within it.

The report was presented by the co-conveners, Sue Senior and the Rev. Bob Faris. They shared stories the committee heard recounting harm done because of homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism and hypocrisy in the PCC to LGBTQI people and

others. They pointed out that the report also includes stories of grace received in the face of challenge. Most stories were told in Listening Spaces coordinated by the Rainbow Communion in locations across the country.

Sue Senior and the Bob Faris explained that of the 139 stories shared, many were from people who were harmed within and by the church. They did not feel welcome, but instead too often felt ostracized and shamed for who they are.

Gratitude was expressed by commissioners to all who told their stories, and the Assembly affirmed that all people, whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity, are equally beloved by God.

By adopting all recommendations from the Rainbow Communion, Assembly encouraged congregations to provide opportunities for all to offer their gifts in worship in the life and ministry of the church. It also agreed that identifying as LGBTQI and/or being in a same-sex marriage is not grounds for discipline and censure in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada will offer a public confession to all individuals and congregations harmed by the church through exclusion and marginalization, seeking forgiveness from God and from all those affected. Resources will be created in the coming years to equip an inclusive church and a fund will be established to support psychotherapy/counselling for those who have experienced harm done by homophobia, hypocrisy, transphobia and heterosexism in the denomination.

As part of the report, a poignant and painful video summary of the shared stories was presented using voice actors to protect anonymity. The video included stories of people receiving covert messages of hate, living with shame, depression and guilt for who they are and feeling less than whole. They spoke of a pervasive, subtle transphobia, bullying, and feeling betrayed by the people they thought loved them. The moderator thanked all those who had the courage to share their stories.

To learn more about the Rainbow Communion, visit presbyterian.ca/listening.

Life and Mission Agency

Multiple recommendations from the Life and Mission Agency were

LGBTQI is an acronym currently used to refer to people whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and/or whose gender identity does not conform either to binary male/female categories or the "assigned" gender at birth. LGBTQI is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex.



The Rev. Dr. Daniel Scott, Moderator of the 2021 General Assembly, which was held online for the first time from June 6–9, 2021.



passed that included urging congregations and individuals to study and implement the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women; taking actions on poverty reduction, gun violence and systemic racism; and encouraging the church to write elected officials about the need for cutting carbon emissions, creating a sustainable economy, and meeting or surpassing the Paris Agreement targets and other measures to support climate justice. Policies on workplace harassment in the church, for addressing and supporting mental health were also presented and adopted. After many years, the church endorsed the Joint Statement on the Physical Punishment of Children and Youth encouraging people to learn about positive disciplinary alternatives to physical punishment of children and youth.

International Affairs

The International Affairs Committee report raised awareness about multiple issues of international concern, includ-

ing human migration, human trafficking, the global environmental crisis, the loss of biological diversity, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis and human rights issues in Israel/Palestine.

Letters will be written to the Canadian Government encouraging:

- Signing and ratifying United Nations and International Labour
- Organization conventions on migrant and domestic workers.
- Implementing key strategies to combat human trafficking.
- Acting on outstanding goals protecting biodiversity.
- Redoubling efforts to slow climate change and urging other governments to do the same.
- Acting to protect the human rights of Israelis and Palestinians, particularly children.

Congregations are urged to learn more about these issues, join in efforts to advocate governments at all levels and implement actions as they can.

Visit presbyterian.ca/social-justice to learn more.

Continued on page 37



JUSTICE

Revealing the Truth: How Project Ploughshares Builds Peace

By Kelsey Gallagher, researcher for Project Ploughshares

In September 2020, Project Ploughshares, which has tracked Canadian arms exports for more than four decades, published a major report, Killer Optics: Exports of WESCAM Sensors to Turkey. It documented Turkey's widespread use in several conflicts of Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs, also known as drones) that operate with key Canadian-made technology. In many cases, such use violates Canada's arms control regime and international law, putting the onus on Canada to stop exports.

Soon after the report was released, Turkey became involved in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The government of Canada then suspended arms exports to Turkey. Without question, that act has cost tens of millions of dollars.

With an official government investigation ongoing, it is uncertain what the final decision on exporting arms to Turkey will be. But we might be justified in thinking that the publication of Killer Optics had a role in the initial stoppage and might encourage the Canadian government to continue to block arms sales to Turkey in the future.

Growing Arms Exports to Turkey

For decades, Canada has exported large volumes of weapons to such major customers as the United States, the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia. But not to Turkey. In 2016, Turkey imported only \$4.2 million in Canadian arms.

Then, in 2017, Canadian arms exports to Turkey increased to \$49.9 million. In 2018, exports jumped again—to \$117.9 million. For 2019, the last year for which we have full governmental data, exports to Turkey were valued at \$151.4 million.

What happened? There were no big announcements from Canadian arms manufacturers and no media reports on the ballooning arms exports.

Project Ploughshares did some digging. Our investigation revealed that, since 2017, Turkey has bought more than \$200,000,000-worth of electro-optical/infra-red (EO/IR) combat sensors from L3Harris WES-CAM in Burlington, Ont. These imaging sensors, which identify, track and sometimes fire on ground targets, are employed in Turkey's growing fleet of UAVs, particularly the Turkish-

made Bayraktar TB2. In some cases, Turkey has also illicitly "diverted" drones equipped with these sensors—to Libya, for example, where it has illegally supplied allied factions, in clear violation of Canadian and international export regulations and the UN arms embargo on Libya.

In recent years, the Turkish military has launched airstrikes in Iraq, Syria, Libya and within Turkey itself. There have been allegations that, in so doing, Turkey has breached international humanitarian law (IHL), by failing to adequately provide for the safety of civilians.

Thus, when Turkey illegally invaded northern Syria in October 2019, Canada and many allies froze weapons exports to Turkey. The idea was to stop the provision of arms that might threaten the safety of civilians in the affected region.

We learned, however, that the "freeze" was not as complete as it seemed. According to Statistics Canada, large volumes of imaging equipment—in other words, WES-CAM sensors—quietly continued to be exported to Turkey.

Killer Optics and Nagorno-Karabakh

The release of *Killer Optics* generated strong media interest. However, at first, the government of Canada displayed no interest or apparent awareness of the report's allegations that exporting arms to Turkey breached Canada's obligations as a State Party to the international Arms Trade Treaty, including for such reasons that they might have been used in IHL violations.

In the days following the report's publication, conflict broke out once again between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey, a long-time supporter of Azerbaijan, immediately became involved, providing military aid, including weapons. As the media soon revealed, Turkey was supplying Azerbaijan with Bayraktar TB2 UAVs, which *Killer Optics* had demonstrated were invariably equipped with WESCAM sensors. In other words, Canadian-made hardware was directing Azeri airstrikes.

The global media response was immediate, and the Project Ploughshares report was frequently cited. This time, the government was forced to publicly address the allegations. Prime Minister Trudeau announced that then Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne



An Uncrewed Aerial Vehicle used by Turkey in conflicts. PHOTO CREDIT: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

had launched an investigation. Three days later, Champagne told members of the media that he had "suspended the relevant export permits to Turkey."

But, of course, Canadian weapons had already been deployed—illegally—to the conflict area. When Azerbaijan achieved a quick and complete victory, pundits gave much of the credit to Azerbaijan's possession of Turkish UAVs, which would have been blind without Canadian targeting technology.

The Current Situation

Last fall, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development began an investigation into the export of WES-CAM sensors to Turkey and their use in conflict. Staff from Project Ploughshares, Amnesty International Canada and the Rideau Institute testified before the committee. That investigation was still ongoing at the time of this writing.

In March, through the committee, the government released more than 400 pages of heavily redacted documents; a further 3,000 pages could be released at a later date. Even censured, they represent a treasure trove for the Canadian peace movement, which has never before had such a window into the inner workings of Canada's arms control regime.



But it still seems like too little, too late. These Canadian-made weapons have already spread throughout the region, contributing to violence in some of today's most heinous conflicts.

If the government of Canada wants to contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflict abroad, it must develop the political will to deny problematic arms exports from the outset. In this case, the recipient was Turkey. In other cases, it is Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates or Israel. Canada's legal obligations not to arm those who are likely to breach human rights or misuse weapons are unambiguous.

And Project Ploughshares also learned from this experience. That even in these days of misinformation and social-media din, the truth can come out—and make a difference. Civil society doesn't craft policy. That is the role of our government. But we can encourage elected officials to learn the truth and to act on it. In this way, we contribute to the foundations of lasting peace.

Killer Optics can be found at ploughshares.ca. The spring issue of the quarterly publication The Ploughshares Monitor is now available. Project Ploughshares accepts donations online. Thank you for your support.

Project Ploughshares is the peace research institute of the Canadian Council of Churches.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a partner of Project Ploughshares and is represented on its management committee by the Rev. Matthew Lingard.

JUSTICE

Having Difficult Conversations

By Dr. Allyson Carr, Associate Secretary, Justice Ministries

Faith touches on every aspect of life. And the Bible and Christian theology is concerned with creation, geography, politics, sex, race, money, power, health, birth and death, the work we do and how we do it. These are all complex matters. One of the guarantees of having discussions in the church is that there will be difficult conversations, and trying to learn how to get better at being in them is important.

About a year ago, I was participating in a conversation about racism with people from a variety of racial backgrounds and church denominations. I wasn't sure what to expect. I knew we came from very different life and religious experiences. I knew everyone was likely feeling tense. Derek Chauvin had just been charged with George Floyd's murder and the Black Lives Matter movement was coming into sharp social focus again. Protests were erupting in the US and in Canada. There was anger, grief, and pain. I kept thinking, "we are called to love our neighbour... but what does that mean in this situation? How should I love, what should I say?" And as I sat there trying to think of what to say, someone in the group asked us all to first answer the question, "Given everything going

on... what are you feeling in your soul?"

I remember that question striking me with something like fear. What the question was asking wasn't just a surface-level check-in ("how are you doing?") before we got started, nor was it asking my opinion. It was asking me to be vulnerable. More importantly, it was asking me to hold space for other people to be vulnerable. It involved emotional risk on the part of everyone who answered. It involved the responsibility to let people talk and to bear witness to their pain, anger, and other emotions—because how the different people in that virtual room were feeling in their soul, in their deepest parts, often drew on years of particular pain-or, for some of us, years of not seeing others' particular pain.

Being vulnerable requires different things from each of us based on our lived experiences, the things that inform and shape how we go through the daily basic tasks of living. To have a good conversation about a difficult, emotionally charged topic (like racism), there needs to be respect shown to the vulnerability that honestly answers a question like "What are you feeling in your soul?"—and part of that respect is purposefully listening to those with lived experience about the thing we're talking about. In the instance of racism,



people of colour are those with lived experience. Their stories and voices should be weighted more strongly than those in the conversation who (like me) are white.

In difficult conversations, not everyone's voice and not everyone's story should have the same weight. The first time I understood this was in a conversation about sexual harassment (another one of those difficult conversation topics). The conversation unfolded because a friend's young teenage daughter had been cat-called by a man on her way to school. Four of us—three women and one man—were talking about the incident. And while all of us agreed it was wrong and were disgusted with the stranger who had done this, one of us thought it was a rarity, just a "bad apple." The other three (all of us women) were quick to respond that just wasn't true.

At first the man in the group was shocked as we told him story after story of different times this had happened to each of us, and how quickly some of the incidents had escalated well beyond words. We spoke

about how these repeated instances shaped our self-perception and daily details of our lives; when and where we walked, whether we go out alone even during the day, whether we considered ourselves basically "safe" in spaces like schools or workplaces. To his credit, he listened. I saw the moment he realized that we had systemically different experiences than he did, and there were simply some things he had trouble seeing or understanding, because he hadn't been forced to live those experiences every day—so he just hadn't noticed them. He acknowledged and respected our experience as a source of authority to speak from. He asked respectful questions, and he learned from it. He learned from us. I learned too: from the fact that he was willing to listen and have his mind changed, I learned that he really did care—and I learned how to act when I'm not the one with the lived experience.

When we weight conversations such that the people in them who have those lived experiences can speak about them and be heard, when we give authoritative weight where it should be, a conversation has more room to create understanding that appropriately shapes our social bonds-in church or outside. Such understanding is what is sometimes in Scripture called agape, which could be understood as "the kind of love that holds community/ family together."

As I sat in that conversation about racism, I thought of my friend and the example he set. Now when I enter a difficult conversation, I consider carefully how much weight my voice should have—because the truth is, there are times it shouldn't have much. It is important that we show respect to the other people in the conversation and consider what that respect could look like. I've come to understand that sometimes the love and respect we're called to looks like being vulnerable and telling your story—but other times, love looks like listening and learning when people have different experiences than me, whether they make sense to me in the moment or not. Because maybe I just haven't had the experience to see it yet.



Contribute to Global Vaccine Equity

By Katharine Sisk, Program Coordinator, Iustice Ministries

By now, most of us will know at least a few people who have been vaccinated, or we may have received a dose ourselves. There is relief in knowing our loved ones are protected even as there continues to be anxiety for those who remain vulnerable.

In some parts of the world, vaccinations are difficult, if impossible, to access. Your actions can make a difference. Love My Neighbour is a tion to allow for increased produc-Canadian campaign advocating for tion of COVID-19 vaccines in multiequity in vaccination accessibility.

How can you get involved? You can raise your voice and encourage the Government of Canada to provide strong and timely support to COVAX (the global initiative to provide funding for vaccines to lowand middle-income countries) and to support the temporary waiving of TRIPS (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) at the World Trade Organizaple countries.

You can encourage the Canadian government to support local and community-based health organizations. You can donate to the Love My Neighbour project in support of vaccinations for vulnerable populations around the world.

We can all play a part that will open pathways to global vaccine equity. Visit lovemyneighbourproject. org to get involved.



RECONCILIATION

Praying for Lives Lost at Residential Schools



The Memorial erected on the PCC-run Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School site in Kenora, Ont., as part of the Truth and Reconciliation commemoration activities.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada grieves with the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation, who released news that the unidentified graves of 215 children have been found on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School

in Kamloops, B.C.

The devastating pain and loss this news triggers are not isolated to Kamloops, but is shared by all who lost family, friends or community members to Indian Residential Schools. So many Indigenous chil-

dren never came home from the schools where they were forcibly taken, and the weight of the trauma that loss has wreaked in Indigenous communities, in which the church shared a large role, is still causing intense harm today.

In humility, the church calls for a time of prayer and lament to honour the lives of those children whose graves were just found and for all family, friends and communities who have lost loved ones through the Indian Residential School system—for whom this news opens fresh wounds. We also call for a time of reflection and recommitment to reconciliation. In the month of June, which is National Indigenous History Month, we encourage all church members to reflect on the harmful history in which we have been involved, and from that reflection seek renewed ways to work for healing and reconciliation with Indigenous people.

Praver

Creator God of love and justice,

Comforter of those who mourn,

We have learned of more Indigenous children lost, more children who never were able to return to their families from schools they should never have been forced to attend in the first place. This news is devastating. We pray first for healing for the children's families and communities, who are met again today with pain no one should ever have to bear.

We also acknowledge the actions of our church, our complicity in running residential schools and taking children like these, who were just found, from their families. We repent for the pain and ongoing harm we have caused, and ask for the will and wisdom to act to end that harm. We have asked for forgiveness and committed to work for healing and reconciliation. But we recognize that for many, that change came too late.

Comforting God, we pray for healing in the communities and families of all who experienced residential schools, comfort for all those grieving, and strength for all to pursue reconciliation.

Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada operated 11 residential schools and, in addition to the trauma of being forcibly taken from their homes, families, and communities, students faced abuse, neglect, non-consensual experimentation, increased illness and death. The church has confessed its role in running the schools and is seeking a path of reconciliation with Indigenous people. But the trauma those schools caused for individuals, families and communities continues to significantly impact Indigenous people today. As a church, we are called to repentance and to action.

To learn more about how the PCC is pursuing reconciliation and supporting Indigenous Rights visit presbyterian.ca/indigenous-justice. The National Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available for any former residential school students and others needing support. That help can be accessed at 1-866-925-4419.

Two Years Since Release of **National Inquiry Final Report**

June 3 marked two years since the publication of Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The report exposed the paths through which violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLG-BTQQIA (two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual) people was allowed to take root, and the intense harm it causes not only to those murdered or missing, but to their friends, family, and community. The report (mmiwg-ffada.ca/finalreport) discussed colonialism and the ways colonialism operates even today, drawing on stories witnesses provided to help readers understand how this violence continues to thrive and what can be done to stop it. It found that the violence of colonialism

has constituted a genocide against Indigenous peoples in Canada.

When the report came out two years ago Reclaiming Power and Place published 231 "Calls for Justice." Some of these calls are directed at governments, others at institutions, social service providers and policing, still others at industries. Eight of the calls (Calls 15.1–15.8) are addressed to all Canadians. There are things named in the Calls for Justice that each of us can do to help end this violence. The federal government received the findings of the final report when it was released and promised a National Action Plan to respond to the Calls.

It has now been two years and, as of writing this article, the National Action Plan has yet to be released. When the Rev. Amanda Currie was Moderator of the PCC, she participated in a



The Rev. Amanda Currie, former moderator, spoke to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau about the status of Canada's National Action

call with Prime Minister Trudeau and the Canadian Council of Churches in May. She was able to ask the Prime Minister about the status of that National Action Plan. The government has begun the process of developing the plan in collaboration with Survivors and family members, as well as other stakeholders, but there is no expected release date for it yet. You can track the action plan's progress and see descriptions of how it is proceeding at bit.ly/3fnzONP.

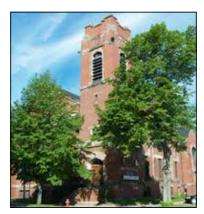
Responding to Reclaiming Power 2021 General Assembly. of the work of reconciliation. The 2019 General Assembly referred Reclaiming Power and Place to the Life and Mission Agency and the National Indigenous Ministries Council for study and asked for a report with recommendations to the next Assembly to find the further actions that we can take. That study was completed and there are recommendations in the Justice Ministries section of the Life and Mission Agency report to the

and Place's Calls for Justice is part

Since the situation it addresses is complex, Reclaiming Power and Place is lengthy, but it includes an executive summary that lays out the report's key points, methods, and reasoning. The PCC also has a freely downloadable study guide on the report to help people work through its themes. That guide is available under "resources" on the Indigenous Rights page of our Social Action Hub at presbyterian.ca/justice/ social-action/indigenous-justice.

ONLINE MINISTRY

Technology, Commitment and Faith Saved the Day



Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I.

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

As has been the case with our fellow congregations across the denomination, COVID-19 has not been kind to the church. From extended periods during which congregants were not allowed to attend, to times where attendance was limited due to public health restrictions, worship has been a difficult component of our ministry to fulfill. Along with this, funerals and weddings have been hampered by the reduction in the number of people permitted to attend.

Senior members of the congregations have been isolated in their facilities without the benefit of visitation by ministry staff, relatives and friends. Hospital and palliative care visitation has been eliminated at the most critical time for those requiring an encouraging word of comfort.

Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I., has been fortunate enough to have knowledgeable volunteers and staff who have figured out a way to reach our membership within the confines of lockdown and public health restrictions. These innovations of "how we do church" have been a blessing spiritually and financially.

Prior to the pandemic, we had been recording weekly services and placing them on YouTube as well as copying DVDs for distribution to a range of nursing homes. Never had this exercise been more important than when we were forced to close our doors without knowing when we would ever be open again.

We are pleased to note that during the entire coronavirus situation, we have never missed a Sunday service. By adding the live stream component to our audiovisual activities, as well as posting recorded services on Facebook and YouTube, we were encouraged to see how many in our congre-



gation saw this as a "new-normal" means of worship. In fact, our viewership frequently doubled our normal Sunday morning attendance, which is usually about 350.

Daily readings and online Bible studies were added to our website and Facebook page and, through these efforts, our congregation stayed actively connected throughout this awkward period of our history. As an added benefit of these outreach tools, we have discovered that we are now sharing our worship services with folks across the country and beyond.

The interesting result from this technological work is something that was never the driving force behind the initiative in the first place. The unexpected aspect of this outreach has been the positive financial commitment from our congregation. We are truly grateful that envelope contributions in 2020 were only half a percent lower than they were in 2019. This shows that staying connected by whatever means possible does in fact keep the congregation interested and active while sustaining their sense of stewardship to the church. We feel blessed by how, together, the Zion congregation has weathered such an unexpected interruption in our worship and ministry history.

The Journey to Online Worship at Knox College



Antonio Siracusa taking part in Knox College Chapel online worship.

By Antonio Siracusa, Master of Pastoral Studies/Master of Divinity, worship convener for Knox College Chapel, Knox College in Toronto, Ont.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, attending worship in the chapel at Knox College in Toronto, meant so much to me. I always looked forward to walking into chapel, seeing friends, acquaintances and staff members while awaiting the beginning of worship. There I found community, yet simultaneously, private time. I would sit down and pray, or take in the architecture—especially when the sunlight shone through the orange, gold-brown windows. Once worship began, I knew I would be affirmed in steadfast faith, encouraged and challenged to delve deeper into my understanding of the Christian faith.

That kind of worship experience

was to change, however, as the ramifications of COVID-19 were felt around the world. Throughout 2020, Knox College maintained a keen eye and firm grip on monitoring developments related to the impact of COV-ID-19 on community and academic life across the college and University of Toronto. In August 2020, it was confirmed that classes would be only accessible online. These protocols also meant that the Knox College worship services would have to find a new way to continue.

Three main challenges presented themselves for online worship: finding preachers; finding musicians and singers for hymns; and finding volunteers for scripture readings and prayers. Dr. Brian Irwin received many suggestions for preaching/service leadership from the Knox Community, and he fine-tuned the selection to ensure that those chosen upheld Knox College's mission and vision.

The Knox College Worship Compeople from the Knox Community (past and present) as possible to participate. And we saw and heard from preachers representing the span of leaders from within The Presbyterian Church in Canada as well as from the Church beyond Canada's borders. Some of those preachers were from Egypt, Cuba and Trinidad & Tobago.

The online worship services facilitated a unique opportunity for the Knox College Chapel Choir. Claire Lemiski

(MTS) spearheaded the choir's virtual engagement, which initially started out with 10 people in the fall. "Over the course of the year, we had a total of 18 people participate," said Claire. Her YouTube Channel, Sing-A-Part, was inspired by the preparations for working with the Knox College Virtual Choir in the Fall. Claire said, "It started off as a simple way to post some video tutorials for the group. But it occurred to me that many other communities were also trying to figure out how to sing together online, and perhaps these resources would be appreciated by other groups." Claire is now working with four different churches and one hospital in their choir preparation and production process, as well.

This past academic year, I have dearly missed walking into the chapel at Knox College, seeing my friends those united in Christ, and worshipping as our beloved Christian Community. I have missed catching the promise of life and rebirth that the sun's rays mittee decided we wanted as many would bring as they shone through those warm, colourful stained-glass windows. Fellow classmate Christine Samuel (MDiv) agrees that Knox College Chapel is vital for students. "One of the more spiritual experiences at Knox College is the Tuesday afternoon worship services held in the sanctuary. Students know this time is set aside to connect with God and many of us look forward to the break this time offers from the regular routine of lectures and studies."

Yet we were grateful to be able to worship together online this year. Christine continues: "Worshipping together allowed us to feel the presence of community, connectivity and continuity at Knox. It was especially meaningful to have former students participate in worship, as this gave us an opportunity to see and experience the richness of culture and diversity of students who attended Knox College. Student participation also increased, as they were able to pre-record and send in their parts, which was done at their convenience with the understanding of meeting the deadlines. There are many moving parts to online worship and it was definitely worthwhile for Knox to put this effort forward as it became a staple and something to look forward to every week."

This academic year, the windows at Chapel were different, but still meaningful. The window panels on the computer screen showed people from the Knox Community shining their own light, enthusiasm and reverence for Christian worship. In again seeing those from my cherished Christian Community at Knox College, I was surprised to find God's grace at work in continuing to bring our Knox College Chapel Community together in such a strange time. I discovered comfort and countless blessings in seeing people I respect, look up to, learn from, appreciate and value. And I was strengthened in knowing that Knox College's Christian Community is held firm in

belief and faith of Jesus Christ.

COVID-19 put a temporary stop to in-person worship gatherings, but it certainly has not halted Knox's vision of people of faith building vibrant communities of God's love and hope. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer so eloquently put it in his classic text, *Life Together:* The Classic Exploration of Christian Community:

"Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity."

From the Sept. 26, 1912, Laying of the Cornerstone Ceremony, to 2020-2021, when the Knox College Worship Committee laid the foundation for online community worship, Knox College Community Worship continues to grow, thrive and move forward in deeper Christian faith and in deeper Christian community.

You can view the online Knox College worship services at Knox's You-Tube Channel: youtube.com/Knox-CollegeCA



ONLINE MINISTRY

A Gift from Covid to St. John's, Medicine Hat



Darrell Risk at the sound board and Dave Cruickshank at the monitors.

By the Rev. Jeff Lackie, St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta.

March 15, 2020, was the day everything changed for us. The Session of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta., met prior to worship and agreed to "suspend worship" for at least two weeks pending the news about the spread of COVID-19.

Then the fun began.

What should we do? How would we continue to be the church if we couldn't come to church? A plan developed slowly—and it included one Sunday without any worship options, unless you count the prayers of the minister on an early morning walk as I tried to find enthusiasm for recorded worship offering.

St. John's first ever "virtual" worship was recorded from my home

office by dropping short videos into a Keynote slideshow, then exporting the finished product to our newly created YouTube channel. This was not exactly "Hollywood North," but it was a way to provide a Sunday morning experience, of a sort.

Gradually we branched out. Using Zoom, we recorded conversations with members of the congregation about how they were experiencing the COVID-related changes in their lives. We added recorded singers and readers. Het myself believe we were riding the cutting edge of change. (Look at us, we're a virtual church!) And Easter online made way for a summer of... no change.

Session met regularly and the first item of business was always, "How do we return to worship when it's safe?" Session acknowledged, early in the process, the importance of offering an online service—either recorded or live—as a continuing option. As we made plans to prepare the worship space for our eventual return, we were also considering what technology would be needed. It was time to call in a professional. And it was more than a happy accident that the professional we called also happened to be the son of a retired minister of St. John's.

Dave Cruickshank owns a business that offers all manner of tech-specific help here in Medicine Hat. St. John's hired Dave to give the church's website a facelift in 2018, and he was happy to help us put together a list of equipment that would help us offer a better online experience. The Session authorized the purchase of a new computer, cameras, wireless microphone and assorted software that would "get us started." So, we got started.

By the end of August, Session judged that we could safely resume holding worship in-person, but we did not have our new equipment organized. So, for our first stage of "hybrid worship," the preacher doubled as tech director, running the Zoom meeting from a cart-mounted computer in front of the pulpit, which had to be repositioned to capture the soloist. The Zoom call was recorded,

and the recording was later uploaded to our YouTube channel. (Look at us—we're innovative and experimenting!) It was also exhausting.

Gradually, volunteers offered to help with the tech—prompted by a Sunday featuring a guest preacher who was not interested in doubling as tech-director. Darrell Risk took charge of the Zoom meeting and camera positioning. Then the time came to set up our new gear.

Did I mention this plan also required an Internet service upgrade? Of course it did. And once that was complete, the "GOD-CAST control center" was ready to go.

Dave and Darrell now operate a two-camera live stream via YouTube that is also part of the Zoom worship call. It's a marvellous bit of technical magic that involves Open Broadcast Software and creating "virtual cameras" for Zoom participation. The result is that people can worship in person (currently up to 15% of the capacity of the worship space, or 35 people) or by joining the You-Tube live stream, which is simulcast in the Zoom call and embedded on the homepage of St. John's website while being recorded and archived on the YouTube channel for those who prefer their worship on another day of the week.

The Zoom link is sent out weekly by email, and the YouTube channel is linked through the church website at stjohnsmedicinehat.ca.

Is it perfect? Not at all. Is it cool? We think so. Is it church? Even our least technical members have told us "yes." And we owe it all to COVID-19.

Read more about the activities taking place in Medicine Hat on page



Connected by Traditions in Salmon Arm



The virtual Stations of the Cross during Holy Week.

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

One of the things that seemed important to focus on at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Salmon Arm,

B.C., as pandemic restrictions extended for a longer and longer period, was providing ways for people to feel a connection with one another and with the traditions of our worship.

Over the past year, we have tried a variety of things. When we went into the second closure of the church building just before Christmas, there were some traditions that were important for us to keep, even if we could not experience them in the usual ways we're used to.

First was the pre-service social of warm drinks and cookies prior to the Christmas Eve services. We incorporated an Agape Feast into the service, where those who worshipped from home were invited to gather online with coffee or some other beverage and cookies and share in a simple liturgy. For that service, we included a video of our pianist playing and singing a Christmas carol. Many commented about how they enjoyed hearing a familiar voice. Not too long after Christmas, when two members

of the congregation and the pianist participated in a special service of Lament and Hope to mark the anniversary of the pandemic, I heard again how good it was to hear familiar voices.

Then, in the preparations for Holy Week, our pianist asked me about a Stations of the Cross experience, where one household group at a time could walk through the sanctuary to meditate and pray. I was already planning a Stations of the Cross and was captivated by the idea, so I changed it to work as a walkthrough experience. Only two households signed up to come to the sanctuary, but one couple made a video of their journey through the stations and we shared it during worship. Again, the comments people made were about how good it was to hear familiar voices.

This experience tells me that what people are really needing is that sense of community. And while we can't have it in person, it is enough to hear the familiar voices and see

the familiar faces. What we are doing now at St. Andrew's is having the pianist prepare a prelude in which she sings one verse of a few hymns like the pre-service sing-alongs we used to have. And we are inviting one person to join us on video day to read the scriptures.

We are deeply blessed with wonderfully talented, gifted and willing people. Their shared ideas help make the worship experience richer, and the ways in which a variety of people participate increases the sense of connectedness for all of us. I, for one, am deeply grateful that I am no longer alone in the sanctuary with one person behind a camera. Even that one extra reader adds a layer of spirit and energy to the worship for me

We like to hear familiar voices and see familiar faces. I like that, as we figure out how to be a body while separate, the sense of connection and the sense of purpose keeps us all united.

ONLINE MINISTRY

God's Faithfulness in North Bay



"Reverse Advent" food drive delivery to the Canadore College Student Food Bank.

By Mark Savill, Communications Team Leader, and Keith Pacey, Finance & Stewardship Team Leader, Calvin Presbyterian Church in North Bay, Ont.

As the year 2019 ended, Calvin Presbyterian Church in North Bay, Ont., was enjoying meaningful worship, engaging book studies, challenging sermons, a growing LOGOS children's program, a new Congregational Care Team, a very effective Mission and Outreach Team, and a clean, safe, up-to-date facility that enabled ministry in and through Calvin, North Bay. God was with us!

2020 started with enthusiasm. Calvin was enjoying the blessings of a well-defined ministry plan and teams working to fulfill ministry goals. God was indeed blessing the congregation. But something was stirring that would force Calvin to look at how we ministered in a fundamentally different way.

With the promise of spring came a worldwide pandemic.

With much of the world starting to implement social distancing, travel restrictions and lockdowns, and financial markets in turmoil, many people were experiencing heightened

levels of anxiety. Initially, North Bay seemed to be avoiding much of the disruption. Then, just before Easter, North Bay, too, was forced to endure what the rest of the world was experiencing. Calvin had to close its doors and was unable to have parishioners attend services. So, what to do?

Through a small but dedicated group of volunteers, Zoom services were refined each week in a "trial by fire" approach. Through Zoom, ministry teams met regularly. We continued to enjoy weekly worship, baptisms, communion, book studies and special celebrations to honour members. We also enjoyed telling the Christmas Story—although in a different way—and provided two Christmas Eve services. Through God's provision and the congregation's support, this unexpected capital project was generously funded.

"Parking Our Hope in God," a project started in 2019 to create a new parking lot to serve a busy church, came to its conclusion in 2020. Through God's provision, the congregation's generosity and the efforts of many, this project culminated in the fall with a parking lot service of dedication. We felt God was with us!

While many were concerned about food and toilet paper because grocery stores had empty shelves again, Calvin, through God's provision and the congregation's generosity, brought food and paper products to Nipissing University and Canadore College



Advent bags packed and ready for delivery.



Online "Bible Bingo" with the LOGOS children's program.

food banks, and provided continued support to Hope Awaits Ministries Men's Shelter and The North Bay Gathering Place Food Kitchen. God was with us!

Through God's provision and the congregation's generosity, the Congregational Care and Christian Education Teams joined forces and, with the help of a few elves, were able to pack and deliver Advent packages to every member's household. Throughout the pandemic, even in periods of lockdown, the Congregational Care Team helped to provide special goodies for some of the people who have been unable to join our Zoom worship services. They also collected and delivered lap blankets so that a warm Christmas hug could be shared with senior members of the Calvin family. Individual families kept in touch with others, safely, through phone calls, emails and special deliveries of homemade treats. All these activities have been wonderful opportunities to connect with each other in a more personal way. God was with us!

The year 2020 saw most of our ministry teams working together on multiple projects. Vibrant worship and music services (with many

original songs and virtual guests) and a virtual LOGOS program were mainstays throughout a challenging year. We assisted with special projects in Costa Rica and continued to participate in the Lettuce Reach Out program. We continued to support PWS&D, Presbyterians Sharing, the Salvation Army, the Warming Centre, various food banks and the North Bay Recovery Home. While observing all COVID-19 protocols and restrictions, our building continued to welcome daily recovery group meetings. God was with us!

One notable blessing is that we have been in touch with more "Calvinites" week by week through email and Zoom services than we were before the pandemic started. God is with us!

Although 2020 was a challenging year, God has been and continues to be with Calvin, North Bay. Through God's provision and the amazing generosity of the congregation, we have been guided to new ways to do ministry and to reach out to God's people. God is indeed with us!

To learn more about activities at Calvin, North Bay, check out the year-in-review video available at calvinnorthbay.ca.



An outdoor skating party—the last event before facilities were closed.



MUSIC MINISTRY

A Sweet-Sounding Journey in Stouffville

Submitted by St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont.

The year 2019 saw an exciting musical remodelling at St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., upon the arrival of its new Director of Music, Craig Garnham.

Having obtained his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Music and Choral Conducting at York University, Craig's extensive choral background has allowed him to perform not only province-wide but south of the border, too, including New York City's Carnegie Hall.

His appointment as Director of Music has brought with it many changes to the church in downtown Stouffville, a commuter town 45-minutes northeast of Toronto. Included among the changes were the introduction of contemporary anthems for the senior choir (now referred to as the "St. James Choir"), more evenly distributed music throughout the service and the addition of chanting psalms from the Presbyterian Psalter, which has given the choir an opportunity to lead the congregation in responsive

psalms

Although the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown might have set back some of Craig's efforts, it did not lessen his ambition in the slightest. With his encouragement, St. James moved all operations online and began recording services and broadcasting them via YouTube. Craig is responsible for editing and mixing all parts of the service, before uploading the finished video.

"This modern method of worship has become the new normal—but also a surprising foundation upon which choral music can evolve and thrive," he said. "The commencement of remote Sunday services has offered up an opportunity to experiment with pre-recorded service music."

After the summer of 2020, the church began recording services from St. James' Main Street sanctuary, while at the same time welcoming its first ever cantor, Keli Jay. As cantor, Keli's crucial role is to lead the congregation in the singing of prayer, hymns, anthems and responses. The addition of a classically trained sing-

er to the choir has opened doors to a host of new choral material.

Despite these dark times there is still hope, a chance to adapt and evolve. Craig has done just that, doing his best to make the most out of an ever-changing situation. The culmination of his efforts resulted in two anthems each week in Advent, a Christmas Eve candlelight service and the Christmas Day service. The December 24 service featured choral recordings of two special anthems, which included additional singers who recorded and participated virtually. Craig also recorded and selfproduced his own Christmas concert to accompany it.

Recording music isn't easy, he explained. Each piece comes with its own unique challenges and requires many hours of careful and intricate mixing and editing before it can be uploaded. Oftentimes, the work begins before recording has even started—each project needing to be thoroughly analyzed and planned out.

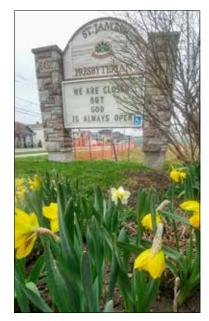
"It is crucial to understand the extensive work involved in creating any performance whether live or pre-



sented virtually," he said. "The final 45-minute outcome that the congregation sees requires weeks of work and months of planning and preparation."

Overall, Craig inspires with his unwavering optimism and perseverance. He will continue in his endeavour to produce quality choral music at St. James and to redefine liturgical music in this new age of remote worship, for the foreseeable future.

He is already planning several special projects for the remainder of this year—one will involve the St. James Choir singing a handful of virtual hymns for the end of June, and the other will be a recording of Fauré's Requiem for All Souls Day.



Staying Connected at St. Andrew's Guelph



By Anne Holman, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Guelph, Ont.

For St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Guelph, Ont., the year 2021 continues to present challenges, like it does for all churches, to worship in a very different manner than prior to March 15, 2020—the last in-person service in our sanctuary.

In that service, the Rev. John Borthwick's announcements mentioned that there may not be service

in the sanctuary going forward because of the possibility of provincial shutdowns. Little did we know what would lie ahead! Without missing a beat, our talented Tech Team, headed by Peter Devries, immediately accepted the challenge to "keep us connected" using Zoom and You-Tube. On March 22, 2020, we had our first Zoom service. Since that time, we have augmented our equipment with better Internet service, cameras and an entire recording area in the balcony. Peter has recorded a choir of eight (all masked), keeping within the 10-person limit allowed.

When the limit was five people, Peter and his son, William, would record the service from the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. The services are available through Zoom, where we can visit with members before and after the service, or on YouTube on Sunday mornings. Since December, arrangements were made with the local Rogers Cable TV channel to re-broadcast our service at five different times the following week. The Rev. John Borthwick opens each



broadcast with an introduction to one aspect of "church life" and a pertinent explanation about Christmas, Easter, communion, etc.

Just as before COVID-19, there are weekly Bible studies (with many more attendees) and monthly Session and Board meetings. The attendance has been rewarding, with

present and former members and adherents, as well as many community folk "Zooming in" for services.

We, at St. Andrew's, Guelph, remain connected as COVID-19 keeps people apart. During the shutdown, the Property Committee has taken advantage of the empty building to complete many projects to beau-

tify and update the church, including fresh paint, new floors and new lighting, as well as the installation of sanitizing equipment, which will be required once we are back to inperson services. Donations to the church have continued with the assistance of CanadaHelps.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES





George Smith (left) of the Men's Fellowship group at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket, Ont., presented Mary Ann Proulx (above), Newmarket Crosslinks Street Outreach Coordinator, with clothing and toiletry donations as part of their community outreach ministry. The Crosslinks Street Outreach Program is a mobile van service that provides services to people in York Region experiencing homelessness, as well as those living at low- and moderate-income levels. Mary Ann Proulx encourages us all to: "Stay strong, stay positive and stay safe."



First North Pelham and Rockway Presbyterian Churches, a pastoral charge in rural Niagara, Ont., marked Good Friday by participating in a car pilgrimage. Participants were given a map along with a guidebook for each of the nine stations (containing a passage of scripture, prayer, words to a hymn and the instruction to the next location). Seventeen cars travelled the area, and several others did the pilgrimage at a later time.



A group from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lethbridge, Alta., took part in the "Coldest Night of the Year" walk on Feb. 20, 2021, to raise funds for the benefit of the local Streets Alive organization.





An Easter Egg Prayer Tree was set up at Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C., to give individuals a safe way to offer an Easter prayer.



Sue Rochon, Jean Smith and Sheila Ingle (above), and Coralyn Morrison and Jean Smith (right) of the Women's Fellowship group at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket, Ont., prepare food offerings for local Newmarket missions and Evangel Hall Mission.





EVENTS & ACTIVITIES









Representatives of churches in Moosomin, Sask., including St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, gathered on Good Friday to do a Walk of the Cross. The cross was carried from St. Andrew's and prayers were said at each stop. The stops along the walk included the cenotaph, courthouse, medical clinic and food bank. PHOTO CREDITS: THE WORLD-SPECTATOR







This past year certainly posed a challenge. The congregation of Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fredericton, N.B., had to get creative in connecting with their shut-in seniors. Some members of the Ladies Group have been keeping busy knitting or crocheting "Prayer Shawls" for those who could use a cozy hug.



David Berry, seated at the Casavantes pipe organ in Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fredericton, N.B., where he has been organist and choir director for 25 years and was recently honoured. His dedication to music ministry has spanned for over 60 years.





This year, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Nanaimo, B.C., hosted a drive-by Stations of the Cross in the church parking lot and in friends' front yards. Congregation members told the Easter story, waving to and greeting friends through closed car windows.

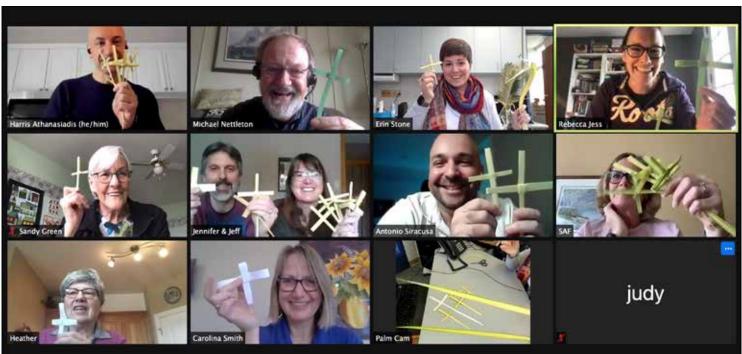


Easter hampers were delivered by volunteers from the Outreach & Missions Team of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont., to approximately 50 homes in the community, including Women's Resources, a local charity that serves vulnerable women. Folks received enough food for a special Easter breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus a little chocolate treat, all of which was purchased locally to support our local merchants. It was such a practical way to put St. Andrew's core values of social responsibility and loving relationships into action.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



The congregation of Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., took part in an online palm-cross-making event in March. Individuals had the option to coordinate curb-side pickup of the palms and were also given instructions on how to make crosses from paper at home.







The congregation of Armour Heights Presbyterian Church celebrated Shrove Tuesday a little early this year with an online "Youth Pancake Tue-MONDAY" event.



The congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hillsburgh, Ont., celebrated the marriage of their minister, the Rev. Stephen Mutavdzija, to Carita in mid-April. The happy occasion was captured and shared online through Zoom.



 $The \ Rev. \ Steven \ Webb \ of \ Memorial \ Presbyterian \ Church \ in \ Sylvan \ Lake, Alta., conducted \ the \ Easter \ Sunrise \ Service.$



EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



Despite the current lockdown, volunteers from St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont., continue to prioritize donations to Canadian Blood Services.



The Rev. Bruce McAnsh of Burlington East Presbyterian Church in Burlington, Ont., recently formed a trio (of himself) for the congregation's online Children's Time.



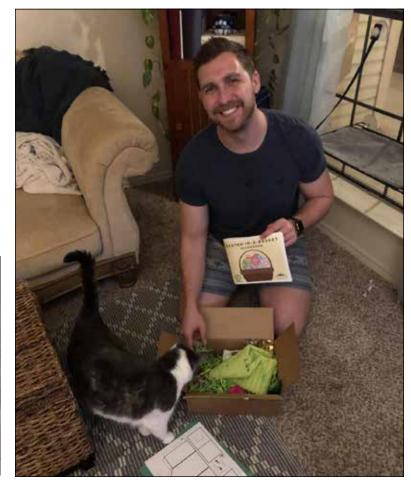
This year, Holy-Week-in-a-Bag kits were created for members of Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C., to help bring the stories of that fateful week up close and personal for everyone at home. Small items from local community businesses were added to a decorative bag, along with some printed articles, including a reading schedule to follow the lessons of Holy Week.



This Easter, families and friends of Camp Kintail in Goderich, Ont., received activity packages as part of Camp Kintail's Easter-in-a-Basket program. The packages contained eight minilessons, one for each day from Palm Sunday to Easter, providing a meaningful and fun Holy Week and Easter experience from the comfort of home.







Don't Go Hungry Program Continues



By the Rev. Laurie McKay, St. Aidan's Prebyterian Church in New Westminster, B.C.

Since May 2020, St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church in New Westminster, B.C., has taken part in a program that sets up food hubs to distribute grocery hampers to almost 1,000 people in Metro Vancouver every Saturday. (And even more so this past Easter weekend when we fed 1,500 people as other food programs were closed.)

The Don't Go Hungry program takes place on three church sites (St. Aidan's and Knox Presbyterian Churches in New Westminster and Gordon Presbyterian Church in Burnaby), plus the Queensborough Community Centre. We are hoping to expand to another "pop-up" site that is close to low-income high-rise apartments.

St. Aidan's has partnered with United Way, the Federal Government, the City of New Westminster, the Greater Vancouver Food Bank, Fraser Health, and Family Services, along with school boards and businesses, including SaveOn Foods, Buy Low Foods and Guru Nanak Free Kitchen. These organizations, as well as farmers and over 100 community volunteers all help to make this happen.

Together, we have kept up with increasing food demands by offering fresh produce, dairy, meat (including Halal), eggs and high-protein dry goods. One of the food needs that there has especially been a need for is more fresh produce. We have created a garden at St. Aidan's, complete with a food forest, pollination garden, and seven raised beds—one of which is mobility friendly and complete with benches. Produce

grown includes apples, cherries, strawberries and other berries. This project to provide fresh produce year-round is guided by a theology student with a permaculture background!

We have also responded to the demand for non-food items by offering diapers and feminine hygiene products.

We have received over \$100,000 from United Way and federal grants to create an infrastructure. We now have two part-time staff members, and have purchased dollies and tents to manage the long lineups.

We have also built good relationships with local grocery store owners and restaurant owners who allow us to borrow fridge and freezer space when we need short-term storage space beyond what we have.

Align Construction has rebuilt a store in the manse beside St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church, complete with shelving from Sobeys, new flooring and a fridge and freezer. Their employees also put \$6,000 toward providing food gift cards to New Westminster families for the Christmas season. The Burnaby families received gift cards for Christmas through a \$3,600 donation from Omicron and Buy Low Foods.

At the Gordon Presbyterian Church site in Burnaby early this year, one gentleman gave out \$100 bills to at least 14 people who were standing in line for two hours before distribution time. This remarkable act of kindness generated such applause and generosity of spirit that one woman who had received one of the \$100 bills felt compelled to give it away to someone who had missed out. That same day, an anonymous donor handed the coordinator at another site \$200 in cash to help their neighbours.

I have been stunned to silence (a great feat!) and tears at how compassion crosses boundaries. God is at work! The energy and passion of a community that looks into the eyes of a stranger and sees a neighbour in need is God made flesh.

We are currently in the process of transitioning from plastic to cloth bags, as we know that this is important for the environment. We were initially wary about the cost and our ability to do this safely in the midst of the pandemic. Cloth bags are four times more expensive; and would people return them so we could launder, refill and exchange for the used ones?

But, of course, people are returning the bags, and one of our

congregation members, who owns a laundromat, absorbs the cost of laundering them. Trusting our neighbours has not disappointed us and the environment is a little less choked by plastic.

Moving forward, we hope to develop a more robust delivery system of groceries and hot meals. There are many who could benefit from delivery—like those who are isolated, quarantining, or returning from the hospital, as well as single-parent families who cannot wait in a lineup, and, in particular, one elderly lady with a walker who, every week, is escorted to the front of the line—that extends for blocks—so that she doesn't have to wait.

This mission has brought us together as a community. Each person who stands in line sees the site as their "church." As one volunteer who decided to help out while also needing food said, "I feel God here in a way I don't at other food banks." There is laughter, respect and compassion. We are a community.

The Don't Go Hungry program and its mission to tackle hunger and reduce the stigma around accessing food programming was first featured in the Fall 2020 edition of the *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper, page 36.

Breakfast Ministry in Chatham



Breakfast ministry at First Presbyterian Church in Chatham, Ont.

By the Rev. Mike Maroney, First Presbyterian Church in Chatham, Ont.

One of the most significant ministries of First Presbyterian Church in Chatham, Ont., is our Saturday Breakfast, which has been in operation since 2001. Prior to the COV-ID-19 pandemic, we had been serving a free, hot, sit-down breakfast for 100–150 guests every Saturday morning. We estimate that we have served over 200,000 meals since be-

ginning our breakfast ministry.

The need for food assistance has increased over the years, and we are one of the many churches and agencies that work to help people in need in our city. Not only did we want to help by providing a nutritious meal, but we endeavoured to create a warm, hospitable and friendly environment for our guests.

At the sit-down breakfast, there are flower arrangements on each table and placemats that have a greet-



ing from First Church and a breakfast prayer on them. Our guests gather around the tables and spend time visiting and engaging in conversation. Through a grant from the Essex-Kent presbytery, we were able to replace our old rectangular tables with round tables, which increases the feeling of togetherness.

Though many of our guests come to the Saturday Breakfast because they are having difficulty making ends meet, there are also those who come because they are lonely and they appreciate the fellowship they share. As

well, we, at First Church, have become friends with our guests, and we offer them prayer, support and a number of services through the agencies in our municipality.

All of this came to a stop in March 2020 as the first of the pandemic lockdowns began. Worship services, all groups and the Saturday Breakfast at First Church were suspended for what we thought would only be a few weeks. As the first few weeks stretched into months, we lost hope of restarting our full breakfast in our dining hall.

Knowing that we would not return to "normal" soon, we consulted with the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit to make plans to reopen our breakfast as a bi-monthly take-out service. We had to keep our number of volunteers to a minimum, while observing proper physical distancing and wearing masks and gloves. We chose to limit our take-out breakfast menu to meal choices that were the most portable.

Our take-out breakfast is packaged and served to our guests outside our

church building. Since we do not require people to come and sit down in our dining hall to receive a meal, we often give multiple meals to individuals. It is not unusual to give out four to eight meals to one person so that they can take them to their family or neighbours. At our last breakfast, we served 110 meals.

We endeavour to serve the take-out breakfast every week. It is a blessing to be able to help our community in this small way. It is also a humbling experience. When we hand out the meals, we hear first-hand the difficulties that people are going through in our city. And yet, our guests never fail to say thank you, and to tell us how this one meal is something they can depend on when so much in their life is up in the air.

We look forward to the day when we can open our doors once again and welcome our guests into our dining hall to enjoy the good food, conversation and friendship that is the hallmark of this ministry. May that day come soon!



Quilting While Quarantined in Bobcaygeon

By Myra Coene, Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon, Ont.

Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon Ont., has a sewing group called Knox Frox. Several years ago, we started making dresses and shorts for children in developing countries; we have sent them to nine different countries. Through the years, we have had marvellous donations of fabrics and supplies that we use, all of which are well organized in the basement of our church.

The past year, because of restrictions, we could not gather to sew, so we took to sewing at home. Our sewers could not even meet for a picture! We now affectionately refer to our-

selves as "Quarantine Quilters"! We have shipped boxes to the Cariboo Church in B.C., and to Winnipeg Inner City Missions in Winnipeg, totalling approximately 35 quilts. Also, we have recently delivered about 30 quilts locally to the Women's Resources Shelter and Kawartha Lakes Pregnancy Center in Lindsay. Others in our church have contributed sewing and knitting to these groups too. We have now been asked to make 75 gift bags to be distributed to golfers involved in a charity golf tournament in September.

We have received heart-warming notes of thanks in return for our work, and we pray that our gifts show God's love in times of need.



Quilts made by the "Knox Frox," sewing group in Bobcaygeon, Ont.

Brightening Lives in West Vancouver

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



May Loudon, local artist and member of West Vancouver Presbyterian Church.

As a Communication Team member at West Vancouver Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C., we were again so grateful to have the opportunity to apply for a Small Neighbourhood Grant from the West Vancouver Community Foundation.

As the isolation of many in our community and church continues, particularly those older adults living on their own, we wondered what would make a small difference to brighten the lives of these shut-in people and give them encouragement.

May Loudon is an excellent artist, recently widowed, and finding these ongoing isolated months difficult. She loves to paint, particularly on cards.

I asked her if she would be part of this project where we would send 100 cards to people in the church, neighbourhood and beyond. She was delighted and said, "It gives me purpose."

We applied for the maximum amount of \$500—\$400 for the cards and art supplies, and \$100 for stamps and spring stickers from the local Dollar Store. We were delighted to receive the grant.

When May finished painting a batch of 20 cards, they were delivered to Communication Team member Joanne Wallis, a retired teacher, who, with her lovely McLean penmanship, wrote beautiful and inspiring notes in each card. Then I picked them up to address the envelopes, stamp, sticker and mail.

A simple inspiring note brought great joy and encouragement to many lonely people in our community. One person even had hers framed!

As we prepare to celebrate our 70th anniversary as a congregation in 2022, our minister, the Rev. Heinrich Botha, is working on an art project that will incorporate many of these beautiful paintings by May (who celebrated her 89th birthday at the end of May!).



Calvin Presbyterian Church in Halifax, N.S., distributed Easter treat bags to seniors from the congregation, which included Easter greeting cards coloured by the youth from the church. Shown receiving theirs is Harry and Phyllis Poole who live at Parkland Retirement Home.





St. Andrew's Newmarket Supports the West Indies

By Christine Samuel, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket, Ont.

The La Soufrière volcano in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the West Indies erupted on Friday, April 9, 2021, spreading ash throughout the island and forcing approximately 20,000 people to evacuate their homes to go to shelters and nearby islands. Subsequent eruptions and volcanic activity (lava flows, earthquakes and ash plumes) continued for weeks afterwards. The United Nations declared it a humanitarian crisis

as the island was left without clean water and electricity.

The Phillips family of Toronto, Ont. (who migrated from Saint Vincent 51 years ago), turned to their friends at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket, Ont., for help in responding to a request sent out by NEMO (National Emergency Management Organization) for immediate supplies for the island's people. The congregation stepped up to support this emergency response by donating essential hygiene items, including deodorant, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, face masks, sanitary napkins, diapers and toilet paper. NEMO distributed these items to people in shelters.

In early May, the eruptions subsided, but many of the evacuees continue to remain in shelters as there is still seismic activity on the island, and many homes impacted and uninhabitable.

Thank you to the Phillips family and everyone at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church who donated generously to this outreach. Every little bit counts!

See more outreach activities at St. Andrew's, Newmarket in the Activities & Events section on page 21.





Members of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket, Ont., collected supplies to send to victims of a volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Meals for Mission in Fergus



Linda and Tom May pick up their dinners from Quinn Dyce. PHOTO CREDIT: THE WELLING-

By Chris Clements, Youth & Discipleship Pastor, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fergus, Ont.

In March 2021, the youth mission team from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fergus, Ont., hosted a Drive-Thru Chicken Dinner fundraising event. A team of 19 people,

parents, joyfully served 280 dinners.

Dinners were pre-ordered by the local community and pickup was offered street-side, adjacent to an industrial-sized barbecue. The tenfoot-long barbecue produced quite a bit of smoke while cooking the chicken, making the event noteworthy with the local fire station, who sent a including some parents and grand- scout vehicle to ensure the volume of March 2021 visit could not take place during 2020.



Cody Mehlenbacher (left), and Jim Mehlenbacher cook the chicken to perfection. PHOTO CREDIT: THE WELLINGTON ADVERTISER

smoke was nothing to worry about.

Funds were being raised for a food program in El Salvador, which the youth mission team had intended to visit in March 2021. Although a

due to COVID-19, the team hopes to be able to visit at some future point. Both the host congregation in El Salvador and St. Andrew's youth enjoyed exchanging letters and photos

The youth team at St. Andrew's was reminded of Jesus' words in the Gospel of John: "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart—I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).





Ready, Steady, Stop!

By David Banfield, chair of the Steering Committee for Switched on Seniors, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont.

Ready, steady, stop! This is probably not the opening line that you would expect; however, it was a situation that was recently experienced by a team of individuals from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont.

The story starts back in 2019. At St. Andrew's monthly community lunches, there were discussions with seniors, both members of the congregation and residents of the community, about how they might create a program that would reach out to seniors who were struggling to keep up with the demands of technology, and how to couple the outreach with some fellowship opportunities. Many accounts that the group gathered indicated that virtually everybody they had spoken with had a cell phone,

but only about 10% of those interviewed knew what the phone could do for them other than make or receive a call. Further research showed that this limited knowledge also extended to tablets, Chromebooks, etc.

The group developed a program that provided "tech training" tailored to seniors, along with fellowship. The group behind the idea were themselves all seniors and, as it turned out, also had limited tech knowledge, so it was decided that in order to do the job well, an expert would have to be engaged to share their knowledge and experience.

As the planning evolved, it became clear that this all could not be accomplished on a volunteer basis. This led to the submission of a federal grant application to the New Horizons for Seniors Program, and much to the surprise and joy of the group, a grant was awarded to start up the program in early 2020.

St. Andrew's also sponsored the

program by providing space and facilities for weekly meetings at no cost to the group. The group was now taking on a more formal framework. They adopted the name, "Switched on Seniors," moved into the recruitment phase for a program coordinator and purchased equipment. The Steering Committee remained a volunteer group, since part of the financing arrangement required the program to be seniors providing services to seniors.

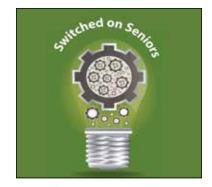
The program was ready, steady and set to launch on Thursday, April 30, 2020; then along came COVID-19 and everything stopped in its tracks. The Committee took an optimistic view of the situation and thought that the outbreak would last no more than a few weeks (they got that one wrong!) and so the starting date was delayed again and again. When it became apparent that the pandemic was not ending anytime soon, the group set about reengineering the program into a virtual

education opportunity.

Teaching people how to use a tablet or smartphone in-person is straightforward: you can point to the right buttons to press and make sure that everyone is doing the same. Trying to do that via Zoom takes an extra degree of expertise. Fortunately, the newly hired program coordinator (who's also a senior) worked through the vagaries of the situation and succeeded in launching the program online, albeit to a slightly different audience than had been originally intended.

The program is now up and running. Although the in-person interaction and all-important tea and biscuits are missing, the program is reaching out to a growing group of seniors who are fast becoming super Zoom users, mastering other technologies along the way. The program is open to all seniors and runs at no cost for people who attend.

Re-engineering the program to be



available virtually necessitated the creation of a website (switchedonseniors.com) that would be easy to navigate and provide a library of simple video tutorials, along with up-to-date news about weekly meetings. The weekly meetings feature a brief presentation by a local speaker, games, information and the all-important "tech corner."

Switched on Seniors is still very much in its infancy, but the group is growing and looking forward to the time when they can report that it is ready, steady and a go; and when we can open the doors at St. Andrew's to seniors who can come and benefit from learning about technology while enjoying fellowship. In the meantime, this outreach ministry "zooms" on.

Virtual Markets in Markham

By Roseanne Dumitru, Christmas Bazaar Convener, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont.

The traditional Olde Tyme Christmas Bazaar at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., was certainly different this past year! Our annual bazaar is normally hosted on the first Saturday in November. It is always an important outreach activity, allowing us to welcome many folks into our church. It is an opportunity to make new friends in the community, while raising funds for our ministry and missions. It also allows us to enjoy the fellowship of working together.

Due to COVID-19, the outlook for holding our 2020 bazaar was bleak. With restrictions all around us, Santa, and all his convener elves, were starting to re-imagine how our bazaar could take place. The consensus was that we should try to preserve the tradition of our Christmas bazaar. The goals were too important to just do nothing!

The decision was made to replace our traditional one-day indoor bazaar with a series of virtual bazaars. It seemed like a fine idea. Maintaining our connections to the community, especially during the pandemic, was particularly important.

Normally, hosting the Christmas

bazaar would involve about 75 members of our church, and their friends. That was not going to be possible, but everyone wanted to participate in accordance with their comfort and COVID-19 protocols.

Thus, the St. Andrew's Virtual Markets were born. Knowing we couldn't provide all the items normally associated with our traditional bazaar, the team of conveners got together to prepare a menu of comfort foods. Jean Port contributed a catalogue of crafts. The Rev. Peter Ma contributed his computer expertise and unwavering support.

As a fundraising activity for our ministry and missions, there was no expectation of maintaining the successes of past Christmas bazaars. Were we ever wrong!

The journey commenced with the launch of the Virtual Thanksgiving Market. The menu and catalogues were sent to the congregation . Everyone was encouraged to spread the news through social media. Orders were taken and provision for payment by e-transfer was made. Pickup in the church parking lot was staggered to avoid large gatherings, and social distancing was carefully observed.

The first Virtual Thanksgiving Market was met with a tremendous response! The menu featured St.

Andrew's famous meat pies and a variety of fruit pies. It also included soups and cookies. This first new initiative was certainly a learning experience and a success.

After the first market, we hosted a Virtual Silent Auction, and then a Virtual Christmas Market. For the Christmas Market menu of comfort foods: fruit pies, tourtière, baked goods, jams and jellies. Thank you to our expert chefs! A catalogue of Christmas crafts and delights was also developed.

We were also able to partner with Evangelism and Outreach to assist in fundraising on behalf of Evangel Hall Mission, in order to provide winter clothing to people in downtown Toronto.

Not long after Christmas, we started planning a Virtual Valentine's Market with a new menu and a silent auction.

Overall, our bizarre-Bazaar ended up having three virtual markets and two silent auctions. We were tired, but overjoyed to not only carry on the traditions of our annual Christmas bazaar through COVID-19, but also to exceed all reasonable expectations, beyond imagination!

The journey was spectacular, and the results phenomenal! Through Thanksgiving to Valentine's Day, the support from the Board of Managers, Session and church members, along with the added support of their friends and neighbours, was outstanding. The true success can be measured by some amazing statistics. Our mini-bazaars received 458 orders, for 1,561 meat pies, 576 chicken pies, 453 other comfort foods, 156 fruit pies, 297 soups and about 4,000 cookies. The total number of food items reached almost 7,100. In addition, there were 42 Christmas baskets, numerous Covid masks, as well as crafts and many other unique Christmas delights in various quantities.

The remarkable number of purchases and exceedingly generous donations raised over \$24,000, which was donated to organizations like Presbyterian World Service & Development, local missions and charities, such as Evangel Hall Mission, the Markham Food Bank, the Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold program. Kids 360 and the Markham Stouffville COVID-19 Relief Fund. In the words of Robert Flatt: "The giving of gifts is not something man [sic] invented. God started the giving spree when He gave a gift beyond words, the unspeakable gift of his Son."

Members of the community have acknowledged our initiative and appreciated our efforts in reaching out to them. We believe these innovative





online markets met important needs in our community, and that is very gratifying for all who participated. The goal to continue the tradition of our Olde Tyme Christmas Bazaar, and enjoy the fellowship of working together, has definitely been met once again.

MISSION & OUTREACH

Walk to Jerusalem

By Carol Rigler, Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie, Alta.

Eighty-three congregants at Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie, Alta., made the commitment to take part, in spirit, in a Lenten journey to Jerusalem. This journey called for the time, effort and spiritual reflection that might be involved in such a pilgrimage. Instead of giving up something for Lent, we gave our time. Our time was measured in physical, mental and spiritual miles.

equaled one mile. A coordinator tracked the miles on a spreadsheet and sent weekly updates to the participants.

The theme was: "We are pilgrims on a journey. We are travellers on the road." Participants logged miles through a variety of activities, including: walking, exercising, studying, helping others, reading, praying, playing an instrument, singing, chatting with friends, going to church, writing, journaling, working

Every 20 minutes of participation on projects, knitting, sewing, dancing and whatever got people off the couch!

> The Lenten journey has helped us to enjoy the world and those around us-physically, spiritually and emotionally—and in spite of the pandemic.

> Together, we travelled to Jerusalem and back—a total of 20,922 miles. We travelled for seven weeks.

> This was a most amazing journey. God's love has given us new life and hope. By love, for love, He has risen.

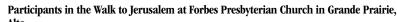
















Food Hamper Program in Medicine Hat



The hampers, ready to go.

By the Rev. Jeff Lackie and Linda Chapman, St. John's Congregational Life and Mission Committee, St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta.

St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta., has a long history of community outreach. One of our longest lasting outreach projects centres on food security for those in our community who are most vulnerable: those who are unemployed or unable to work, and veterans with

very limited resources.

In the early years of the program, St. John's partnered with other churches and organizations to purchase and distribute grocery cards and transit tickets to folks who were struggling. Our sponsoring organization required careful stewardship of the distribution of grocery cards, and folks could only apply every three months. As the program developed, we started to supplement the grocery cards with the occasional bag of groceriesparticularly when there were families involved. Despite the limits, the initial program was greatly appreciated and we served many people.

tions were changing, however, and in 2018 our outside funding was no longer available. The generosity of our members took the lead. Appeals to the congregation had always brought non-perishable food items and cash donations to supplement the grocery card program. These donations began to carry the whole weight of the program, which served, on average, six families per week-all by appoint-



Times and social outreach condi- Linda Chapman and Helen Snortland at the distribution table.

Through 2019, the program shifted to providing food hampers only, as we tried to identify the most urgent needs and think up new ways to meet them. Then COVID-19 brought the program to a halt in March 2020.

After more than half a year in limbo, one of our elders, Helen Snortland, raised the question of reviving the program. After ensuring we could distribute our hampers safely and in accordance with public health guidelines, Helen and Linda Chapman started to re-imagine this outreach.

Helen and Linda organized shopping teams and recruited people to fill bags with non-perishable items and help with distribution days. In October, the program began again but with a difference: for two hours each Tuesday, we would open the church doors and offer a food hamper to any and all-no registrations, no questions asked.

From October to December, we provided hampers for 155 individuals and families. This was comparable to the usual demand of the program for an entire year. So far, job well done. But the need continues and so does the program.

As of March 2021, volunteers have distributed 320 hampers. The program is entirely dependent on donations from the congregation and continues to be well supported; but, starting April 13, 2021, we will be offering the program twice a month.

This ministry is made possible due to the generous contributions from the good people of St. John's. Their continuing support is what makes this program successful. We are also grateful to South Country Co-op which has, for a number of years, donated reusable grocery bags, and The Mustard Seed, a local outreach ministry that offers us excess bread and baked goods when they are available.

Read more about the activities taking place in Medicine Hat on page 18.



Reaching Out in Richmond Hill



Lois Leonard—RHPC member, elder and Pastoral Care Committee convener—is pictured here with Scottish Country Dancer Mike Housley of the Richmond Hill Celtic Connection at the 2020 Rabbie Burns Supper. PHOTO CREDIT: JOANNE WITT, SNAPD RICHMOND HILL

By Susan Johnson, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont.

This spring, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (RHPC) in Richmond Hill, Ont., hosted the Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold program of York Region. The overnight shelter program was originally scheduled to run from November 2020 until March 30, 2021, but was extended to June 30 at the request of York Region due to COVID-19. We were pleased to help the vulnerable in our community by

providing our church facilities for this extension.

The Mission and Outreach Committee raised \$1,485 as an Easter offering fundraiser for the Richmond Hill Food Bank. This fundraising initiative was organized in memory of Lois Leonard (nee McLeod), who, for many years, up until the pandemic began, delivered food items donated by the congregation monthly to the Richmond Hill Food Bank. Lois was a long-time member of RHPC (since 1960) as well as an elder, Pastoral Care Committee

convener and member of the choir. She was also involved in RHPC Christmas bazaars, rummage sales and the annual Rabbie Burns Supper. Very much a pillar of RHPC, Lois died on Jan. 19, 2021, just a few days shy of her 90th birthday, which was on January 25, a birthday she had in common with the late and well-known Scottish poet and lyricist, Robert Burns. We miss her dearly.

For auld lang syne, my jo, for auld lang syne, we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet, for auld lang syne.



Volunteers from the Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold program of York Region at RHPC. PHOTO CREDIT: REHANA SUMAR

Community Hot Meals in Weyburn



Jane Smith from the Church of Christ in Weyburn, Sask., bags a meal for the community hot meals program hosted by a number of community churches, including Knox Presbyterian Church. PHOTO CREDIT: THE WEYBURN REVIEW

By Barb Hudson, Knox Presbyterian Church in Weyburn, Sask.

In the fall of 2016, a community outreach initiative was started at Knox Presbyterian Church in Weyburn, Sask., by the minister, the Rev. Jay Song. The outreach provided a nutritious hot meal to those in the community who were socially isolated and/or in need. It was held in Knox Fellowship Hall. The meals were prepared and served by Knox volunteers one Sunday a month from October through March. Over the next few years, local talent added a bit of entertainment to accompany the food and fellowship, leading to the name change of "Happy Hour" for the guests.

When the Rev. Jay Song shared word of the outreach at a ministerial meeting, other local congregations were very interested in becoming involved. Within a short time, there were enough congregations on board to host the program each Sunday, providing a weekly meal and fellowship during the winter months. With the involvement of community congregations, the program became "Community Hot Meals."

Over time, the program has grown from nine to upwards of 30 guests. The Sunday gatherings have been greatly appreciated by the participants. While it has been a fulfilling experience for our congregation to provide this outreach, it has also given the volunteers of the local congregations an opportunity to work together for a common cause.

In March 2020, the program was put on hold. With COVID-19 regulations in place, we were not able to provide the meals in the format we had known, and some of the congregation's volunteers were not comfortable being out and about. Thanks to the ideas of one of the community ministers, adaptive measures were put into place that made it possible for the hot meals to be delivered to the contacts of the outreach program.

Today, volunteers from several local congregations come together weekly to package and deliver hot meals to the recipients. The same volunteer drivers deliver the meals each week. In this way, the contacts receive regular visits and the fellowship component of the program is not missed as much. Thus, Community Hot Meals outreach carries on. Since November, 822 meals have been delivered to 47 households.



Diana Marcotte ladles soup at the Church of Christ, as a small group of volunteers prepare hot meals. PHOTO CREDIT: THE WEY-BURN REVIEW

MISSION & OUTREACH

Happiness and Homework Go Hand-in-Hand

By Michelle Hauser, commissioned by the Anglican Foundation of Canada

Can happiness and homework really go hand-in-hand? According to the Rev. Wes Denyer, minister at Rosedale Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., and chair of the Steering Committee at the St. James Town Ecumenical Homework Club, they truly can.

"The kids love coming here," said Wes. "The look of joy you see on their faces is a huge reward." The same is true for the club's volunteers, many of them retirees drawn from the three Toronto churches that have helped to ensure the success of the program for more than 10 years. "One of our most faithful volunteers started in her early 70s. Ten years later, she's still here regularly. These are kids; they





Participants of the Ecumenical Homework





Former Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, talks to a child involved in the St. James Town Ecumenical Homework Club.

are fun to be around."

The St. James Town Homework Club is a long-standing ecumenical partnership between Rosedale Presbyterian Church, St. Andrew's United Church, the Anglican Foundation of Canada, and the Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle, which serves as the club's headquarters.

The club welcomes approximately 25 children, ages six to 12, from Monday to Friday, and serves two neighbourhood schools in St. James Town, one of Canada's most densely populated high-rise communities located in the northeast corner of downtown Toronto.

"Our volunteers meet the kids right at their school and walk them over to the homework club," said Wes. "When children arrive, they have outdoor playtime—badminton, field hockey or soccer—and then enjoy a nutritious snack prepared by one of the two part-time staff."

In addition to outdoor recreation and snacks, children receive ageappropriate and highly personalized learning support. "For the younger kids, maybe one of our volunteers will just read books to them," said Wes, which parents appreciate, because St. James Town is a multicultural, multi-linguistic neighbourhood, home to many newcomers to Canada.

"We have computers, so older kids can do research. We have purchased subscriptions to a variety of learning software that helps the children with mathematics, English and geography. Sometimes they will have a writing or math or spelling assignment and volunteers, or the program coordinator, will help them with that work."

Student enrichment is a natural outcome of this small-scale, flexible program that never fails to harness the skills and experience of volunteers. "We have a retired math teacher from Branksome Hall. We have had people who were professional musicians and vocalists who have worked with the kids. We look at what skills and experience the volunteers bring and we use those to the fullest."

The homework club is free to participating families, except for a small snack fee to defray the cost of food. "Each of the three churches provides \$6,000 per year, about three quarters

of the total cost to run the club, and we are grateful to partners, individuals and the Anglican Foundation of Canada, when we need to find the rest."

This volunteer-led, staff-supported program is always student-focused, even when it comes to the monthly Steering Committee meetings. "We don't spend a lot of time on governance. We receive reports and make quick decisions about new badminton nets or jigsaw puzzles or upgrades to the snacks. Most of the time we talk about the kids and their specific learning needs: who needs more math support or reading time and that kind of thing. Our volunteers are integrally involved in these children's lives."

The impact of COVID-19 has been a huge challenge, of course. The schools from which they draw students asked them not to operate. "One volunteer offered to lead the Zoom training effort," said Wes, "and now we have about five or six volunteers leading 10 kids in an online program."

The St. James Town Homework Club is a place where people of different ages and ethnicities come together to share in the joy of learning. According to Wes, a testament to the sense of belonging the students find is that some of the graduates have come back as volunteers to help the younger kids.

Everyone is looking forward to an end to the pandemic, and a return to the program on an in-person basis. "The volunteers and I are always greeted with big smiles and warm hugs. The kids are so happy to get help with their homework, read books, play and be cared for in a safe, supportive environment."

Wes said one student told him, "I love coming here. If I didn't have the homework club, I'd be at home all alone after school every day."



Food being distributed at a village in Sierra Leone.

By Carey Jo Johnston, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sutton West, Ont.

Just like the story of the woman who gave her two pennies, the small congregation at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sutton West, Ont., does not have a lot, but they give what they have to the glory of the Lord.

Sutton West: Small but Mighty

Besides a community meal that has been happening every week for 15 years (currently on hiatus because of COVID-19 restrictions), the congregation has an ongoing ministry to several villages in Sierra Leone. Josephine Freeman, a member of the congregation and originally from Sierra Leone, initially connected the congregation to her village because of the poverty and struggles there.

Last year, St. Andrew's sent about \$1,000 to assist with two special food distributions to three villages, one in June and one at Christmas.



The Rev. Elder Kamara helping with the food distribution of rice, oil, salt and onion at Peace Presbyterian Church in Sierra Leone.



One family that received food.



PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Women Peacebuilders Lead the Way

By Jane Thirikwa, Global Partnerships Coordinator, KAIROS Canada

Located literally under the shadow of the West Bank wall in Bethlehem, Wi'am: Palestinian Conflict Transformation Centre, offers female victims of gender-based oppression and violence just that—transformational change. Wi'am—a partner of KAIROS Canada's Women of Courage, Women, Peace and Security program—is one of four women-led grassroots organizations that offer similar support. The others are Organización Femenina Popular (Colombia), Héritiers de la Justice (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and South Sudan Council of Churches National Women's Program (SSCC-NWP).

Often reserved and hesitant at the start of Wi'am's workshops, participants become more vocal and confident after a few sessions.

"I always taught my children to respect women, but I never taught them to listen to a woman before," said one participant, a mother of three. "But now, I know that my voice is important and that it should be listened to and respected within society."

Wi'am, like other project partners, offers women psychosocial support, legal accompaniment and counselling, as well as numerous workshops on gender-based violence, economic empowerment and human rights.

The Women, Peace and Security program began in 2018 when Global



A participant attends a Wi'am event. PHOTO CREDIT: WI'AM: PALESTINIAN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION CENTRE.

Affairs Canada injected \$4.5 million over five years to support the partners' work. KAIROS—through its member churches and development

agencies, religious communities and individual donors—contributes 25 percent of the funding. PWS&D, which has supported the program since the beginning, contributed \$65,000 in 2020, and again in 2021.

The program is grounded in the evidence-based theory of change that women can become key voices in peacebuilding processes when they are provided with opportunities to heal, restore self-esteem and claim their rights.

Since the program's inception, partners have noted greater confidence among participants, measured according to autonomy, communication, resilience and strength, connecting to other people and ways of thinking; as well as positive changes

in relation to power structures and rights advocacy.

For example, the South Sudan partner holds a monthly prayer for peace gathering that attracts hundreds of women. According to the organization, "Most women who have participated...have courage to speak in public and have become a voice to their families. Some are able to influence male allies, especially the pastors from the churches, and many have the courage to speak to media outlets regarding the campaign for peace and justice."

Additionally, partners have reported increases in participant numbers, services delivered and communities involved.

Because these organizations are part of the fabric of communities, they were able to respond immediately to COVID-19, reimagining and pivoting programs to address new challenges and vulnerabilities of marginalized communities. KAl-ROS' Women, Peace and Security partners have reported dramatic increases in gender-based domestic and state-driven violence since the beginning of the pandemic.

As women shoulder the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for financial and diplomatic support for grassroots women-led organizations is needed now more than ever.

Marking the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council's resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, Oct. 30, 2020, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs announced \$14.9 million in new funding for women peacebuilders globally, with \$5 million of that targeted at grassroots organizations.

While this announcement is welcome, Canada has a long way to go. The Canadian government's progressive Feminist International Assistance Policy, created in 2017, has been hamstrung by limited funding, evident in Canada's paltry official development assistance, which is well below the international standard of 0.7 percent of gross national income, at 0.26 percent.

Presbyterians can help these organizations in two ways. The first is to support PWS&D's contribution to the WPS program by visiting WeRespond.ca/donate.

The second is to urge the federal government to fully fund the Feminist International Assistance Policy by increasing its overseas development assistance to closely match the international standard, and to ensure that this funding reaches grassroots

Impact 2020

By Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Director

We are experiencing changing times and 2020 showed us clearly that we can face new challenges as a community of God's children, sharing in the abundance of creation. During these new challenges, we have been filled with gratitude. In this issue of the newspaper, we are pleased to share with you highlights from our 2020 Impact Report.

We are thankful for our partners who reached out to those in need of support and kept us abreast of the changing needs at the grassroots. Rising to the occasion, our partners helped us to provide critically needed food assistance in Afghanistan and Yemen, life-saving therapeutic nutrition to children in Haiti, economic empowerment and agricultural support in Guatemala and Malawi, and health education and services in India, Nepal, Malawi and Afghanistan.

During the pandemic, partners' activities had to shift and adapt but they did not stop, despite the challenges. We celebrate and give thanks for the persistent determination of field workers and countless community volunteers who work tirelessly to improve overall living conditions in their communities.

We are proud of our collaborations with Canadian Foodgrains Bank, ACT Alliance and KAIROS, which enabled us to multiply resources and reach out to thousands more people in places where our presence was most

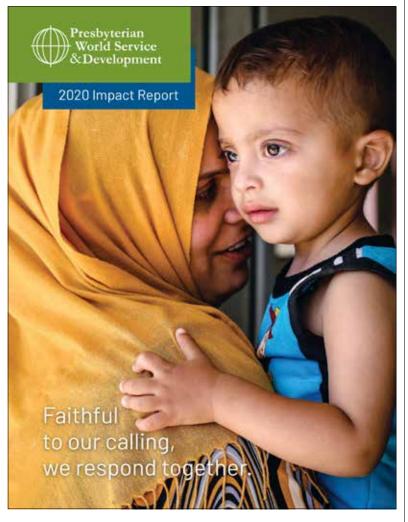
needed—physically and spiritually.

We are grateful for the support of the Canadian government in our response to the Lebanon explosions, which allowed us to access matching funds through Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

With the help of Global Affairs Canada, we also completed eight years of impactful maternal and child health programming in Afghanistan and Malawi. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in maternal mortality in participating communities, and a lasting legacy in the clinics that were built to improve community knowledge on the importance of antenatal and postnatal care of women and children. We celebrate these achievements with gratitude for the financial support from the Government of Canada, and for the relentless efforts of our partners.

Finally, we are deeply grateful for your faithful support. More than ever before, we have been called to love our neighbour. In the past year, Presbyterians have shown this love by contributing to the work of PWS&D. In 2020, local congregations, individuals and legacy donors provided PWS&D with an increasingly solid base to respond to the world's needs. Together, we bring about a more sustainable, compassionate and just world. With your support, we are able to change lives in more ways than we could imagine.

For the full report and financial statements, please visit WeRespond.ca/Impact2020.



IN 2020, PWS&D AND ITS PARTNERS UNDERTOOK 46 PROJECTS IN 22 COUNTRIES.

22 LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

231,683 people participated in food security, health, livelihoods and human rights projects

24 EMERGENCY RELIEF PROJECTS

51,268 people received food, water and sanitation, and other emergency assistance



PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Ensuring Sustainable Development



In Ghana, people with disabilities were supported with skills and business training.

By Karen Bokma, PWS&D Communications

In March 2020, PWS&D began adapting our work with partners to face emerging needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In our food security, health, livelihoods and human rights projects, we moved quickly to provide pandemic support to those affected by lockdowns and to ensure the progress made to ending poverty was not lost.

Health

PWS&D health projects provided essential services and support to 173,439 people in Afghanistan, Ghana, Haiti, India, Malawi, Nepal and Nicaragua in 2020.

Wte completed the final year of our maternal and child health project in Malawi and Afghanistan. Support from the Government of Canada means funds were matched 4:1 over the four-year life of the project, which greatly expanded our reach. In target areas, maternal mortality rates declined by 96% in Afghanistan and 75% in Malawi.

Education and awareness on gender equality and sexual reproductive health helped reshape men's attitudes, allowing more women to access health services. The knowledge and skills women gained through the project will live on and continue to spread. Community leaders and volunteers will continue to share knowledge on safe motherhood practices and provide a link for young women to access health facilities. In Afghanistan, the Ministry of Health has now taken over the operations of clinics established during the project.

Through the project, women and men have been empowered to take active roles in promoting safe motherhood. Even though our role in the project has wrapped up, community ownership ensures that the successes achieved in maternal, newborn and child health will continue far into the future.

Food Security

In 2020, PWS&D supported food security projects that benefited 8,376 people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Malawi and Nicaragua.

PWS&D's focus on food security helps people lead healthy and active lives by improving their access to food today and for the future. These projects became even more important in 2020, when so many faced worsening food insecurity because of COVID-19.

Memory Nthakoma, a 33-year-old farmer in Malawi, had witnessed the devastating effects of climate change on her crops for years-inconsistent rain meant that crop production was drastically reduced. She knew something had to change.

Then Memory was introduced to conservation agriculture—a farming method based on techniques that help improve soil fertility and counteract the effects of climate change. While hesitant at first, Memory took the risk after attending a workshop hosted by PWS&D's partner. "I was quite impressed with what I achieved, so I challenged myself and said I would increase my conservation agriculture field in the coming farming year."

Memory not only increased the amount of land she farms using these new techniques but is also teaching others in her community how to implement conservation agriculture. Food security has increased for many in the community because more farmers are now using the techniques of soil conservation, using locally available materials

Sustainable Livelihoods

PWS&D supported livelihoods projects in Afghanistan, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Malawi and Nepal, which impacted 20,415 people in 2020.

Building sustainable livelihoods means that families are empowered through education, skills training and small business development. When one person becomes self-reliant, they are able to shape their own future and lift up others.

In Ghana, Halidu Dayuma spends his days managing a prosperous business, where he teaches weaving and dressmaking. When Halidu was just 13 years old, his right leg was amputated, leaving him with a permanent disability. While recovering, Halidu enrolled in workshops that provided him with vocational skills training in weaving, tailoring and dressmaking.

After graduating, Halidu started his own business teaching other students and has helped train 44 apprentices. "I owe the program a great deal of gratitude for contributing positively to my life. I am who I am today because of your generous work and love. God bless you."

Human Rights

PWS&D supported human rights projects in Afghanistan, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Malawi, Nepal and Nicaragua in 2020 that reached 29,453 people. In addition, PWS&D supported KAIROS' Women of Courage partners in Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Israel/Palestine and South Sudan.

In Afghanistan, girls and young women are being empowered to achieve leadership positions in their communities. Sadaf and Nargi are two of 50 girls who participated in a summer camp teaching about human rights, leadership and democracy.

Inspired to play leadership roles in their community after attending the camp, the teens joined their local community development council. While they initially faced resistance, support and advocacy by PWS&D's partner, Community World Service Asia, helped them become fully integrated members. Sadaf and Nargi now have a platform to voice the concerns shared by many girls and be part of the decision-making process to address them.

Sadaf and Nargi's example empowers other girls in their community to challenge cultural beliefs that limit education or rights for girls—paving



Farmers in Malawi learned how to grow crops to feed their families, while also addressing the effects of climate change.



In Afghanistan, over 43,000 women, girls, boys and men were supported by PWS&D's maternal and child health project in 2020. PHOTO CREDIT: CWSA

the way for brighter futures and more active participation for women in so-

PWS&D is proud to support the KAIROS Women of Courage project. Rooted in the understanding that in conflict and post-conflict situations women are victimized many times over, the project works to end gender-based violence and increase the participation of women in peacebuilding processes. Support from the Government of Canada means PWS&D funds contributed to this project are matched 3:1.

Continued from page 32

women's rights and peacebuilding organizations by being flexible, predictable and long-term. This funding must also provide support as these organizations recover and transform efforts in response to the pandemic.

Presbyterians can lend their voice to this call by visiting KAIROS' advocacy page to send a letter to their Member of Parliament and relevant ministers: kairoscanada.org/getinvolved/advocacy-current-actions.

This support is vital in helping to empower women peacebuilders in their work to build more equitable, healthier, safer societies for every-



In 2019, Women of Courage partners spoke to Parliamentarians in Ottawa about their transformative programs. Lucy Talgeih (left), the Women's Coordinator at the Wi'am, speaks. Beside her is Agnes Wasuk, Coordinator of the National Women's Program of the South Sudan Council of Churches. PHOTO CREDIT: KAIROS CANADA

Champion (## for Change Passionate about the work of PWS&D? Become a Champion! To learn more, visit

WeRespond.ca/Be-A-Champion



PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

The Special PWS&D Sunday School Project



The Toronto Formosan Sunday School virtually thanking their congregation for their support with their special Sunday School project.

By Stephanie Chunoo, PWS&D Communications

Eleven-year-old Florence knew she wanted to support a project that would help those in need around the world. The previous year, she sold her Halloween candy during a luncheon at her church—the Toronto Formosan Presbyterian Church—for a \$5 donation toward humanitarian aid for children in need.

Realizing that this year would be different, since COVID-19 restrictions meant her church would be largely worshipping online, Florence asked her minister, the Rev. Beth McCutcheon, for some help.

"As Florence's minister, I wanted to encourage these gifts in her. I also saw this as an opportunity for education about PWS&D and its work, both with the Sunday School and the congregation at large," said the Rev. McCutcheon.

With the support of her minister and her Sunday School teacher, Carissa, Florence chose three projects from the PCC's 2020 Gifts of Change catalogue that she was interested in supporting.

Getting to Work

On a sunny day in October, the Sunday School gathered online to learn about the projects and voted on which item to encourage their congregation to support. Ultimately, "Sowing the Seeds of Food Security" was selected and "The Special PWS&D Sunday School Christmas Project" began.

"I thought of this idea because

every year for Christmas, my parents and I donate and so, I thought it might be cool to get everyone to help," said Florence.

The Sunday School got to work right away. With Carissa's assistance, Florence spearheaded the initiative and created a presentation about the project for the Sunday School to share with the congregation during online worship.

As a bilingual congregation, with many members speaking mainly Taiwanese, as well as English, the Rev. McCutcheon worked with the staff at PWS&D to create a special bilingual donation page for the congregation to donate to. "This project really was a partnership between PWS&D and a small PCC congregation. PWS&D brought the vision, commitment and educational resource material—all in a really timely manner," she said.

At the end of Advent, the Sunday School gathered enough support to provide farmers with seeds, communities with livestock vaccines, and cooking and nutrition instruction for families.

Reflecting on the Project

For the Rev. McCutcheon, this project reminded her of Isaiah 11:1–10, a scripture reading that is read in many churches during Advent. At the end of verse 6, it states "...and a little child shall lead them," a verse that came to life during this project.

Speaking about her experience with the project, Florence said, "I really want to do it again next year because it helps other people."

Emergency Relief for Long-term Recovery

By Karen Bokma, PWS&D Communications

In 2020, COVID-19 was the issue that dominated people's lives around the world. Due to the coronavirus, it became increasingly challenging to ensure that affected people received immediate relief in the aftermath of a natural disaster or violent conflict.

Despite these complicating factors, PWS&D worked to ensure that people had access to food, shelter, water, health services and psychosocial support in the immediate term, allowing for recovery in the long-term.

COVID-19 Response

PWS&D responded quickly to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in 17 countries through the ACT Alliance Rapid Response Fund. PWS&D also provided designated support to ACT Alliance COVID-19 responses in Somalia, Palestine/Israel, South Sudan and Bangladesh, with a focus on food security, water and sanitation, and livelihood.

In Afghanistan, where many were already struggling with food insecurity, unemployment and poverty due to decades of ongoing conflict, PWS&D implemented a large-scale food assistance project for Afghans who returned from Iran, with support from Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Monthly cash transfers were provided to 1,100 of the most vulnerable households in Bamyan province, allowing for the purchase of food during the lean winter months.

Beirut Explosions

When a series of massive explosions rocked the Port of Beirut in Lebanon in August 2020, the world saw hundreds of thousands of people become displaced. In a country already struggling with COVID-19, a financial crisis and a large Syrian refugee population, this disaster was unprecedented. In response to PWS&D's appeal, Presbyterians responded generously, contributing \$164,132.

Support to two partners at ACT Alliance helped renovate 70 homes, thereby providing employment in the devastated area. Additionally, water and hygiene kits, school kits and cash vouchers were distributed to vulnerable households. Support was provided to small businesses to help them get back on their feet.

With support from Canadian Foodgrains Bank, 2,000 food insecure households received vouchers



In the aftermath of explosions in Beirut, PWS&D provided food assistance, water and sanitation, and livelihoods support to thousands of families. PHOTO CREDIT: NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID/HÅVARD BJELLAND

to enable the purchase of food. Livelihood support was also provided to 28 small food businesses (bakers, restaurants and grocery stores) to help reconstruct and improve access to food in the affected area.

To learn more about The Presbyterian Church in Canada's work in Beirut, read the cover story of the Winter 2020 issue of the Presbyterian Connection newspaper at presbyterian. ca/connection.

Conflict in Syria

After almost a decade of conflict in Syria, 2020 saw continued need for those displaced within the country. Through efforts with partners at the Foodgrains Bank, food assistance projects reached 7,400 households. Monthly food baskets were distributed to the most vulnerable in order to stabilize the lives of those displaced and affected by the conflict.

Hunger in Yemen

In Yemen, where a serious humanitarian crisis prevails, exacerbated by severe economic decline and

the collapse of essential services, life-saving food assistance was provided to 2,256 households. Vouchers were provided to allow the purchase of food and to prevent families from selling household assets in order to feed themselves.

Hurricanes in Nicaragua

In response to Hurricanes Eta and lota, PWS&D partners provided emergency relief to several communities in Nicaragua. Large areas of crops were destroyed. Seed packages were distributed to 473 farmers, allowing them to replant their crops and increase food security. One hundred families also received materials to repair their homes. Sanitation and hygiene items were also distributed to help prevent the spread of COV-ID-19.

PWS&D's membership in Canadian Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance allowed us to provide necessary interventions in 16 countries. These projects provided life-saving emergency support to 51,268 people in 2020.



In Afghanistan, 1,100 households affected by COVID-19 received monthly cash transfers to purchase food. PHOTO CREDIT: CWSA

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

Defending the Vulnerable through Refugee Sponsorship

By Karen Bokma, PWS&D Communications

PWS&D's refugee ministry is a response to Christ's call to serve and defend the vulnerable and persecuted.

On behalf of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, PWS&D staff guide sponsors through the application process—providing information and support, as well as referrals to training and locally available resources.

While the arrivals of sponsored refugees have decreased since 2016, when they reached a peak, the numbers remain high. Requests to sponsor continue to exceed both the quota allocated to the Presbyterian Church by the Canadian government and the church's capacity to provide support to sponsoring groups. Increased administrative requirements from the government are also having an impact. These additional require-

ments make the sponsorship process much more onerous, making it increasingly difficult to increase the number of people sponsored.

COVID-19 only exacerbated the situation—with refugee arrivals to Canada on hold for the majority of the year. Even once arrivals began again, resettlement numbers were down significantly over previous years and experts worry that it will take years to work through the back-



In 2020, congregations and groups welcomed 23 refugees to Canada with support from PWS&D.

log created by the pandemic. During the year, 23 sponsored people arrived in Canada.

We thank the many congregations, presbyteries and groups that have shown such a passionate commitment to helping refugees settle peacefully in Canada. We are also grateful for those who made additional financial contributions to PWS&D to support the sponsorship program in 2020.

INTERNATIONAL

Saving Hospitals in Nepal

By the Rev. Glynis Williams, International Ministries

Nepal is known for its majestic mountains, such as Mount Everest in the Himalayas, forested hills and beautiful fertile plains. The airport in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, can be full of well-equipped hikers and tourists in this beautiful land-locked country.

Nepal was a closed country until the early 1950s. Following the revolution that opened the country, a group of expatriate missionaries in India were granted permission from the Nepali government to open a hospital in Tansen, and to start women's and children's welfare clinics in Kathmandu Valley.

The United Mission to Nepal (UMN) was founded in 1954 as an international, interdenominational Christian mission. The two mission hospitals, located in Tansen and Okhaldhunga, provide much needed health care and rehabilitation services in this poor country. When COVID-19 and the lockdown was announced in April 2020, UMN was worried. The lockdown meant that Nepali migrant workers were sent home from India, and their small incomes dried up. Families were suffering, and patients seeking care could not pay the hospital bills. It was a funding crisis. In April 2020, UMN began an appeal: Save our Hospitals!

UMN reached out to their partners, former mission personnel and friends, including International Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We contributed a modest amount and agreed to receive donations from supporters and former mission partners from Canada, then forwarded them to UMN.

The campaign was a huge success. Joel Hafvenstein, Executive Director of UMN, sent this note to the PCC: "Thank you so much for your support for the Save Our Hospitals campaign! I can't tell you how encouraging it has been to have partners from all around the world coming together to fill our critical funding gap and set us up to face the challenges of Year Two of the pandemic, whatever they turn out to be. God is good."

Through the generosity of hundreds of people, churches and organizations, over one million dollars (USD) was donated to the two hospitals. Over half came from individuals and churches, including the PCC. Working with others around the world, the faithful supporters of UNM were, "serving one another humbly, in love" (Galatians 5:13).

Long-standing Partnership

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been a UMN partner since 1974. Seventeen mission staff have served in the Tansen and Okhaldhunga hospitals. In 2017, Dr. Nicholaus (Nick) and Rebecca (Becky) Bauman served in the Tansen Mission Hospital; Nick as a surgeon and Becky

became involved with the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre, a place where people with mental illness find welcome and a home. Nick and especially Becky Bauman remain a close link between the PCC and the United Mission to Nepal, for which we are grateful.

Over the years, the work of UMN has expanded and diversified into areas, such as education and development work.

A change of leadership in UMN will occur in 2021. Joel Hafvelstein will leave his position as Executive Director in November 2021, and Dhana Lama will become the first Nepali Executive Director.

Dhana Lama is from the Tamang ethnic minority, which has historically faced significant discrimination in Nepal. She grew up in Kathmandu Valley, where her father worked as caretaker and groundskeeper for a large mansion (in the same neighbourhood where UMN has its headquarters today). Dhana studied nursing, and her first UMN leadership role was as an "in-charge" in a UMN rural health-post, at the age of about 19. She would later go on to get a Masters of Science in Dental Public Health and an MA in Organizational Leadership. She has worked for 27 years with UMN in roles of growing responsibility. After the 2015 earthquakes, Dhana oversaw UMN's first large-scale emergency response, spending many weeks of handson service on the ground in heavily



A women's clinic at United Mission Hospital.



The entrance to the United Mission Hospital.

affected Dhading district. She has been on UMN's Leadership Team for over 12 years, most recently as Programme Director. Her passion for what UMN does and stands for remains unchanged, as does her humble reliance on God accompanying and enabling her in everything.

We look forward to supporting and working with Dhana, praying for her and her colleagues in this important ministry.



Dhana Lama, the new Executive Director at UMN.



BOOK REVIEWS

A Review of *Leadership*, God's Agency & Disruptions

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

Leadership, God's Agency, & Disruptions: Confronting Modernity's Wager
Written by Mark Lau Branson and Alan Roxburgh
Cascade Books, 2020

For a church whose organizational presence and leadership are faced with confusing and conflicted disruptions, this book comes as a providential call to reconsider our attitudes and behaviours. I think everyone concerned with the missioning to which the Trinity is calling us should ponder its provocative descriptions, analyses and strategies. What I particularly appreciate about this theology of church and leadership is its alignment with the preamble, vows and prayers of the ordination services of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This is a superb example of what many missiologists are calling "traditioned innovation."

Let's look at the innovative dimensions and then see if they align with the tradition of church leadership we have formulated in our ordination services.

Branson and Roxburgh have consulted with and educated a lot of church leaders, especially clergy, over the past 40 years. This book is the distillation of pastoral experience, perceptive listening, extensive

research, provocative conversations and a deep devotion to what the triune God is doing in the world.

As I read them, here are the three key challenges that the "Euro-Tribal" churches, like The Presbyterian Church in Canada, face:

- A refusal to face fully the kinds of unravelling that are happening in and around the traditional ways of being church in the Christendom era of assumed dominance in inspiring and influencing the broader culture;
- A reliance on ways of thinking about leadership that are defined and distorted by modernity's wager that we can live life without God and be in control of what happens through the imposition of expertise and planning; and
- A social imagination that seeks to solve the problems faced by the church by reasserting the attractional power that is believed to be what the church once had and needs to recover.

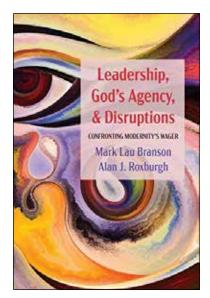
Again, as I read them, the authors are proposing three positive possibilities for transforming the perspectives and habits in which we may be stuck:

 Recognize that the social/economic/religious disruptions in our world are generating a "space-between" for learning new patterns of discipleship that have significant parallels, and therefore lessons, in biblical times, especially in the contexts of the books of Jeremiah, Matthew, Acts and Ephesians;

- Refocus our attention from reliance on human agency, as does so much of our modern culture in subtle ways that have captivated the church, and hone our habits for detecting the workings of the triune God in the neighbourhoods into which we are being sent by the Spirit as ambassadors of Christ's forgiving and reconciling love; and
- Draw on the rich traditions of the church over the generations to attend to, appreciate and appropriate reformulated ways of practicing God's justice with kindness and humility.

The question I was asking while reading this rejuvenating book was whether it aligned in any significant ways the traditions of church and leadership that we commit to in the ordination vows. My answer is a resounding "Yes!" Here's why:

God's agency is the starting point in our ordinations. Jesus Christ is the reality from which all ministries of the church proceed and by which they are all sustained. This is true not just for the leadership in the various offices that are responsible for support and supervision in the missioning of the church, but for everything participants in the church do in their daily lives through their neighbour-



hood/community contributions. It is the triune God who gathers, equips and sends people to participate in a missioning that shares the gospel with the world and offers worship and service as ambassadors to God's forgiving and reconciling love (2 Cor 5:19–21). This is the great affirmation of the gospel cited in the introduction to our most recently approved subordinate standard, *Living Faith*.

The degree to which this agency is appreciated and appropriated varies, granted, but the tradition is there to inspire and guide us.

The dynamics of church life imagined in our ordination services are rooted in our collaborative detecting of where God is leading us and how God is reformulating our faith and life. These habits of consultative conversations are encouraged by Branson and Roxburgh. The Canadian Presbyterian ordering of our work and witnessing together is designed to "take away all oc-

casion of tyranny" by ensuring full participation in those conversations to enable full responsibility for what emerges from them. This is not a polity of experts imposing technical solutions that they control, but rather of God's whole people taking council together to discern the best ways to follow Jesus Christ, the Living Word, in blessing the whole of the Trinity's creation.

The degree to which this collaboration is taking place at every level of the church varies, granted, but the tradition is there to inspire and guide us.

The imperatives of the church's missioning, the internal building up of Christ's church and the external blessing of Christ's world, are encouraged and prayed for throughout our ordination services. We praise and glorify the Lord who has created, redeemed and sustains us as ambassadors of Christ, entrusted with the message of reconciliation, to declare God's mighty acts of love for the world. As Branson and Roxburgh unpack the kinds of leadership they see as crucial for the reformulation of the church's missioning in our day, they explore in stimulating depth the interpretive leadership offered by Jeremiah, the ways Matthew nurtured learning communities, the ways Luke detects the Spirit's disruptive presence in Acts, and the new social relationships Paul is cultivating in his conversations with the Ephesians.

The degree to which these imperatives are informing the work of our courts and agencies varies, granted, but the tradition is there to inspire and guide us.

A Review of Another Long Night

By Ann Isaak, Cheyne Presbyterian Church in Stoney Creek, Ont.

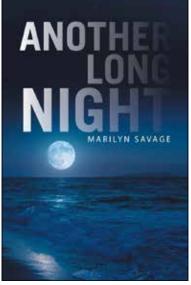
Another Long Night
Written by Marilyn Savage, 2020

Another Long Night is a compelling personal account that attests to the strong bond between Marilyn and her daughter, Joanna, as they journey through a devastating health crisis a week after Joanna's surgery, due to unforeseen complications. Their story takes place during the COVID-19 pandemic and involves an eleven-day stay in the hospital, which added to the isolation and stress of this space of time.

Joanna, a special gift from God to her parents, has had many chal-

lenges in her thirty-six years of life. She has an amazing faith in her Saviour that has taken her through her life and now through her diagnosis of stage-four neuroendocrine cancer. Marilyn has been her voice, advocate, historian, comforter and best friend.

Marilyn has the gift to involve us, the reader, through the fabric of Joanna's life in a way that allows us to experience it as a tapestry woven by God. She engages the reader so that we can feel the anguish and the turmoil when the ups become downs, and through the uncertainties of Joanna's future that, even then, are interspersed with moments of joy and the assurances of God's presence.



Readers will be able to relate to their story as circumstances come up that are out of this family's control, as mother and daughter put their hope in Jesus Christ. Anyone reading this book will see how God never leaves us or forsakes us and provides for all our needs.



BOOK REVIEWS

A Review of *Breathe:*A Child's Guide to Ascension

By Tori Smit, Regional Minister for Faith Formation for the Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda. Originally published on the Synod website April 7, 2021

Breathe: A Child's Guide to Ascension, Pentecost, and the Growing Time Written by Laura Alary Paraclete Press, 2021

Have you been able to find a minute or two to be still, to close your eyes, and after pausing for a moment fill your lungs with the new life God is offering us these days? I truly hope so. If you haven't been able to do this yet, there is a lot of opportunity ahead as we move through the upcoming celebrations of Ascension, Pentecost and on to the longest season of all—Ordinary Time.

Laura Alary, author of numerous wonder-filled children's books, invites us to experience these extraordinary days by breathing deeply and getting ready to grow again. Her new children's book *Breathe: A Child's Guide to Ascension, Pentecost, and the Growing Time*, illustrated by

Cathrin Peterslund, was released on April 13, 2021. I had the opportunity to read and delight in an advance copy of her work and want to share with you what I discovered.

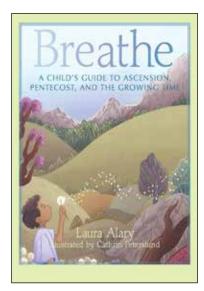
This is the third of Laura's children's books that focus on the seasons of the church year. Following her offerings for Advent and Christmas, and Lent and Easter, this book opens up for children (and adults, too) the stories of Jesus' Ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and then that long season of Ordinary Time, or Growing Time, that takes us from Pentecost all the way through to Advent.

In *Breathe*, Laura has woven a silken thread of our breath through each of these days and seasons, masterfully tying them to each other from the moment the disciples hold their breath at Christ's Ascension, through to their breathing in of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and on to the apostles breathing out of God's love into a growing and changing world. By dividing her work into three distinct sections Laura allows us to experience each day and season on its own while also building a clear

connection between them. In each she has provided a rich and descriptive retelling of the biblical story—a contemporary story explaining and reflecting on the time being celebrated—and play-filled suggestions for family conversations and activities to experience together.

I especially want to highlight Laura's gifted storytelling. Each story Laura shares is a work of art, drawing us in with detailed descriptions and an emphasis on the feelings of the people involved. She fills every story with the tiniest of details, movements and emotional shifts while selecting every word with the greatest of care. Her stories are rich with vivid prose that transports us and gives us pause. Laura "gets" children and the wonder of the story itself. Her retelling of the stories of the Bible alone are worth the purchase of this book.

The compassionate and refreshing artwork of Cathrin Peterslund accompanies every page, giving evidence to the winds of change as she illustrates each occasion. Together, the prose and art invite us to curl up as a family and imagine ourselves along for the journey through the days and months



before us.

So, who might want this book?

First of all families with preschool and primary-aged children will love it. I can imagine families reading each of the sections of the book over the course of the next months; one evening before bed, reading the story of the disciples' confusion with Christ's unexpected departure far too soon after he had come back to them, followed the next day with the contemporary presentation of Ascension Sunday for us to better understand and imagine how the church celebrates the day (we ought to leave an evening's rest just to delight in the biblical story itself before unpacking it together). Then after Ascension Sunday, families could hear Laura's suggestions of possibilities for play with Ascension together. The same pattern could be followed for Pentecost and the Growing Time. By adding this work to Laura's other books on the seasons of Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, all of the church year is now complete, and the rereading of beloved portions of each book throughout the seasons of the year can become a treasured family ritual no matter our age as we continue to grow and learn together year after year.

Ministers and Christian educators will also find good reason to add this book to their shelves. The biblical stories are so well presented, revealing the experiences and feelings of the disciples and apostles while leaving room for wonder and delight. Along with engaging artwork this book becomes a wonderful resource for children's stories, children's classes and events, and even provides the outline and content for seasonal intergenerational gatherings. I have already made plans for using Breathe in worship leadership and upcoming Sunday School lessons in the weeks ahead.

I hope you have an opportunity to enjoy this excellent book. It's going on my shelf and I hope yours, as well. Thank you, Laura and Cathrin for this gift.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Continued from page 13

Ecumenical and Interfaith Guests

The Rev. Marijke Strong

Executive Secretary, Regional Synod of Canada, Reformed Church in America

The Rev. Marijke Strong brought a message of encouragement to commissioners. She pointed out that the PCC and the Reformed Church in America share a deep and rich heritage. Along with the Christian Reformed Church, we are all members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, working for a restoration of justice and renewal of all things to God's design.

The Rev. Strong pointed out that we have a shared mission in the face of a changing world. Together, we are experiencing the changing landscape of church life in Canada. While some churches have been shrinking, others are being revitalized and new expressions of church are rising up.

"The body of Christ is alive and well, it just looks and behaves differently than it did fifty or a hundred years ago...God is doing a new thing,



The Rev. Marikje Strong

not only through us but in us, too."

The Rev. Dr. Takuze Chitsulo Principal, Zomba Theological College,

The Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand, PCC mission staff to Malawi since 2017, introduced the Rev. Dr. Takuze Chitsulo, Principal of Zomba Theological College (ZTC) in Malawi. The Rev. Chitsulo brought a message of gratitude to commissioners, thanking The Presbyterian Church in Canada for their long-time friendship and partnership. "Because of our partnership with the PCC, we have one of the best theological libraries in Malawi."

He mentioned that grants provided



The Rev. Dr. Takuze Chitsulo

by the PCC allow those who work at the college to pay bills and keep doing their good work. He also thanked the Women's Missionary Society for their ongoing support and praised the work of the Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand to launch new initiatives, like online learning, even while Blair is back in Canada due to the pandemic.

"I give thanks to God for the partnership between the PCC and Zomba Theological College. God has done great things through our living connection. I look forward to that continuing into the future...know that your brothers and sisters at ZTC pray for you."

The Rev. Chitsulo explained that the pandemic has impacted the Col-



Imam Muneeb Nasir

lege and the Synods that support them in many ways, but "the Lord is keeping us going and we trust that he will continue to do that." They are moving to online teaching, which they hope to be able to implement in the next year, and are grateful to the PCC for helping them move library resources and courses online.

Imam Muneeb Nasir

Co-chair, National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee

Imam Muneed Nasir explained that the National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee (NMCLC) is a forum for respectful dialogue on things of common interest between Canadian Muslims and Christians. The PCC is a valued participant in the work to build friendship and cooperation between members of the two faiths.

Imam Nasir pointed out that, due to the pandemic, we are at a unique moment in history. Do we return to old ways or work for a more just and equitable world? The pandemic has unearthed inequities and injustices in our country and the world, such as the climate crisis, social and racial inequities, and human rights injustices. We are being called to provide a religious and moral perspective on these important issues.

"History tells us that when our faith communities best model our teachings, we have been the greatest force for common good in the world. The ability to come together and build shared solutions has never been more important than now. Our future lies tougher, rather than apart. Our future lies at understanding the differences that we acknowledge and appreciate about each other. Not the differences that divide us."

The daily summaries, official minutes and guest presentations from the 2021 General Assembly are available at presbyterian.ca/ga2021.



PLANNED GIVING

The Loving Act of Being an Attorney



By Jim MacDonald, Stewardship and Planned Giving

One of the saddest days I can remember is the day I had to remove the photos of our children from my mother-in-law Margaret's room at the nursing home because she became distressed, believing the grandchildren in the photos were somehow present in the room with her and she couldn't understand how to take care of them.

Margaret was a very special woman. In the early years, after Linda and I were first married, Margaret and her husband, Adam, had been very supportive of us, even though our wanderlust often had us living in farflung places. After Adam died, Margaret began to experience the early signs of dementia and her doctors recommended that she prepare for a day when she couldn't take care of herself. At the time, we were living in New Brunswick, while Margaret was

living independently in an apartment in Ontario; so Linda flew in to help Margaret get her affairs in order.

They began by going to see Margaret's lawyer, where they updated the will she had drawn up with her late husband. Once Margaret confirmed the decisions about how she wanted her estate distributed, including a gift to her home congregation, the will was signed.

Then the lawyer also presented Margaret and Linda with "an enduring or continuing power of attorney" document. Although you may have heard the word attorney used synonymously with the word lawyer on American television shows, that's not what it means in Canada. In Canada, an attorney is a person appointed to represent another, or to act in her place and doesn't need to be a lawyer. Even though your attorney can make decisions for you, there are boundaries they have to abide by. They cannot make or change your

last will and testament, change the beneficiaries of your life insurance plan, or transfer your power of attorney to someone else. The lawyer made a special point of explaining that Margaret could continue to make her own decisions, as long as she remained mentally capable.

Once Margaret and Linda signed the Power of Attorney for Property document, Margaret's lawyer provided them with a health-care directive called a "Power of Attorney for Personal Care." Some provinces consider a power of attorney for property to be valid for health-care decisions—if it complies with the laws of the province where it was signed. However, other provinces, like Ontario, require a specific health-care directive to allow representatives to make healthcare decisions on your behalf. In later years, the Power of Attorney for Personal Care allowed Linda to make important decisions about Margaret's care.

As their meeting came to an end, the lawyer then informed Linda that signing these documents wasn't the end of the process! Now Linda had to accompany Margaret to Margaret's bank with signed copies of the Power of Attorney.

Going to the bank was not something that Linda wanted to do but the lawyer insisted that it had to be done while Linda was in town and while Margaret could understand how and why they were changing her bank accounts. Linda had to be present to fully explain the situation and to complete the documents that gave her

joint access to Margaret's accounts.

So Linda and Margaret grabbed a taxi to Margaret's bank, where the bank representative asked many of the same questions that the lawyer had asked. "Are you sure you want to do this?" was the gist of the questions, as he wanted to make sure that Margaret was in complete agreement with giving her daughter joint access to her bank accounts. The bank was doing their due diligence by ensuring that no pressure was being applied to Margaret.

The bank wasn't the only stop they made that day with the powers of attorney documents. It took a full afternoon of taxiing about Kitchener to get it all done. They visited Margaret's family physician, her geriatrician, her insurance agent and her investment adviser. They took so many cab rides, at one point the dispatcher asked, "Linda, is that you?!"

Linda and I have always thanked God that she was able to take the time off work and fly to see Margaret on that day, as her mental capacity deteriorated quickly after the visit. If Linda had missed that window of opportunity, it would have been much more difficult to help Margaret. Instead, Linda had the ability to make financial and property decisions for Margaret when it was needed.

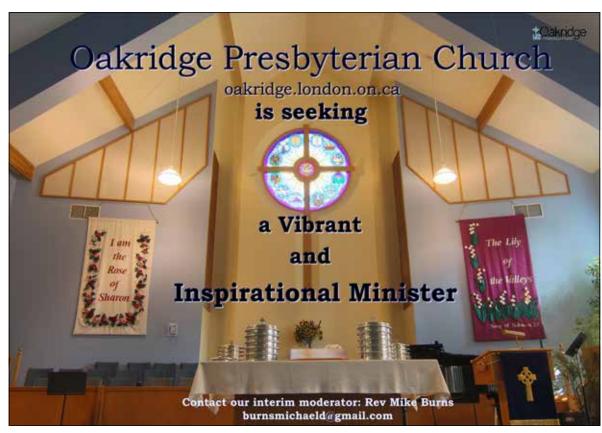
Over time, it became necessary for Margaret to move to New Brunswick to live with us. Inevitably, she needed full-time monitoring available in a nursing home near our home. We were very lucky that the Power of Attorney for Health Care that had been

signed in Ontario was also accepted in New Brunswick. That would not have been the case in some other provinces. If you think that your loved one might inevitably have to move near you, make sure you get the proper health-care directive for the province where you live.

Psalm 112:6a and 9a tell us that, "Those who do what is right will always be secure... They have spread their gifts around to poor people, their good works continue forever." As stewards of God's gifts, we are wise to prepare for our final years by preparing a will and power of attorney documents. While power of attorney documents can ensure the people who know you the best are making decisions for you, making your will is one of the moments in life when you can integrate your heartfelt connections to your family and friends with your faith, priorities and values. With careful prayer and consideration, a well-designed will can provide for your family and friends and leave a legacy gift to a church or charity that is important to your heart. Not only can a legacy gift help lower the taxes paid by your estate, it is the time you can most afford to give.

The time to prepare these important documents is when you are healthy. If you've been procrastinating, resolve now to prepare your will and powers-of-attorney documents and make an appointment with a lawyer to complete the task.

For more information on powers of attorney, visit presbyterian.ca/wills.





REFLECTIONS

Better Without Power?

By the Rev. Steve Filyk, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kamloops, B.C.

Some time ago I officiated at a wedding in a smaller community up north. When I arrived at the church for the rehearsal, I was greeted by the parish priest who gave me the nickel tour and explained the sound system.

I was surprised to meet him. I expected that someone else would have been given this task.

But churches aren't the pervasive and powerful institutions they once were. Yes, several communities have "big box" churches that fill up the parking lots and employ multiple staff. But most churches have dwindling congregations with dwindling budgets led by a pastor who does everything from leading worship to shovelling the front steps.

As we parted ways, I thanked the priest for his welcome. Feeling a little sad that he had to wait on me, I made some offhand comment about the difficulty of being clergy in a time when people aren't interested in the church. But no sooner had I said this than he surprised me again. He replied rather plainly: "The church is better when it doesn't have much power."

I've spent a lot of time thinking about this comment.

Most of us like power. We cultivate it through our employment, our volunteerism and our connections. Power makes life easier. The more power you have, the easier it is to overcome obstacles and achieve goals. The more power you have, the less consideration you need to give to others. With power you can go at your own pace, in your own direction. As for unappealing tasks, the powerful can always delegate them.

But there is a downside to wielding power. Power has a tendency to make us overlook others and their needs. Exercising power can leave us feeling as though we're better than our peers and justified in our cruelties. The Christian church hasn't always performed well when it has had lots of power. Just ask anyone who has attended a residential school.

But power doesn't need to be exercised in a way that is inconsiderate or abusive.

A very different approach is embodied by the church's founder and "CEO," Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus wields immeasurable power. The gospels describe Jesus' control over nature, sickness and evil spirits. And yet despite this power Jesus consistently refuses to use it to coerce or control those around him. He treats everyone with incredible dignity.

This can be seen at the outset of Jesus' public service. The gospels tell us that at the outset of Jesus' ministry, the Devil wants to broker a deal with him. In exchange for his allegiance, the Devil promises Jesus control over all the earth's kingdoms. Jesus tells the Devil, "No deal!" Jesus won't worship pretenders. And Jesus doesn't see people as something to be bargained for.

Further into his career, some of Jesus' own followers want to promote Jesus' political advancement. They think the time is ripe for a revolution and want to install him on the throne, by force. Knowing their intentions, Jesus escapes the crowd and their ambitions. Once again, he shows us that he isn't interested in making others adopt his program.

At the end of his career Jesus is arrested, falsely accused and sentenced to death in an illegal trial. Despite being given an opportunity to speak, he won't recant his claims or blame his followers. He won't make a deal to save his own skin. When he is tortured and crucified by some Roman soldiers, he has no malice for his executioners. Jesus prays: "Father, forgive them..." (Luke 23:34 NIV)

For those who believe Jesus is God's only Son, Jesus has immeasurable power. The Son of God



doesn't need to entertain accusations or endure abuse. Jesus doesn't need to win the hearts and minds of anyone. Jesus can snap his fingers and everyone will fall on their knees.

But Jesus will not compel compliance. Jesus will chide us and challenge us but he will not coerce us. The powerful Son of God will woo and win followers by his example of loving and suffering service.

This is the approach of Jesus. And maybe it is the best approach for the church.

In an age when few people have time for organized religion, the church has lost a lot of power. Some people are mourning this loss. Some are reorganizing politically to regain some clout. This isn't all that surprising. We like power for ourselves and for the groups we are aligned with.

But I wonder if there might be something to be gained in embracing the (relatively) current disempowerment of the church. I wonder if that priest who suggested that the church is "better without power" was a living example of it.

That day I didn't expect to meet him. I expected someone else to answer the door. But then and there I was face-to-face with the leader of a religious community. He wasn't there to extract anything from me or promote any particular agenda. He was there to meet my needs.

Maybe the disempowerment of the church puts us in a place where, stripped of the ability to order around others, we might consider serving them.

Going Back to the Campfire

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

I was listening to "The Current" on CBC Radio recently while driving. The segment was about loneliness. One of the interviewees mentioned the "unbearable silence" of these times. It struck a chord with me.

We are all challenged with the need to "fill time," hopefully meaningfully. I, like many, try to read, listen to the radio and, of course, watch TV. I have given myself a form of carpal tunnel in my thumb from clicking through Netflix trying to find something, anything, to watch. Our son says Netflix would save us all a lot of time if it just added a "random" button.

I'm retired from a career in Adult and Children's Mental Health with

CMHA and Nipissing and Temiskaming Children's Aid Societies. I know a little bit about coping with loneliness, anxiety and fear from many clients over many years.

I have recently stumbled upon something I find to be quite helpful in passing the time and generating calmness: video footage of a campfire by a lake. My wife and I put it on every evening now, and we watch or just listen to the crackling fire as the sun sets.

You can find many campfire videos online. There is something about sitting by a campfire that we as Canadians all identify with. But I think the experience is much deeper and goes much further back in our human ancestry.

Since the dawn of time we have sat by a campfire and peacefully



contemplated our existence. In this time of reset we need to get back to the campfire

The best part of the Book of John for me is in the last tacked-on chapter, where Jesus is sitting on the beach with a campfire going in order to cook the disciples breakfast once they clue in.

In this time of Covid, I believe we will all benefit if we gather, in our own small spaces, and sit by a campfire, knowing who is also there.

Try it. You might like it! The campfire helps us be still.

Letter to the Government on Gaza

In May, the Moderator, the Rev. Amanda Currie, wrote a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau following an outbreak of violence in East Jerusalem and Gaza.

The letter condemns the use of violence and intimidation, and asks the Government of Canada to work with the international community to deescalate the conflict and advocate that international law be upheld.

To read all Letters to the Government, visit presbyterian.ca/letters.



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REFLECTIONS

Church Membership in a Globally Connected World

By the Rev. Janet Taylor, Braeside Presbyterian Church in St. Albert, Alta.

Is it time to change our understanding of membership in the PCC?

There is no question that the events of the past year have driven congregations, Sessions, pastors and outreach programs to explore new and different ways to share the gospel. Camp Kintail's efforts to host a women's shelter is just one example of the Spirit at work during the pandemic.

Shortly after the pandemic began, I attended an online meeting with Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer of Health. The focus of discussion was how churches could navigate the shutdowns. Dr. Strang observed that churches could take one of two views: either the pandemic is an insurmountable obstacle, or it invites unlimited opportunities. Each church and congregation will choose one or the other viewpoint, he suggested.

The Session at Braeside Presbyterian Church in St. Albert, Alta. chose the attitude of limitless possibility stretching out in front of us. Like most churches, we've tried dozens of different ways to keep connected with our members and to reach out to our community in the past year. The Rev. Angie Song, at Vaughan Presbyterian Church in Thornhill, Ont., accurately summed up how church leaders have been feeling when she said, "We're throwing spaghetti against the wall and seeing what sticks!" Some of our efforts have been successful and others fell flat.

Contrary to what we might expect, many congregations have experienced an increased presence in their communities through live streaming and worship recordings. Church members are sharing websites and video links with family globally, leading to participation from people on every continent of the globe on any given Sunday. Church attendance historically was grounded in geography: we attended the church closest to where we lived. That changed somewhat with the invention of the automobile, leading the faithful to choose a worship home within a reasonable driving-distance. But with the explosion of Internet connectivity in almost all churches, any restrictions on who could (and would) attend have dissolved.

We might have assumed that church polity demands that membership in a congregation is only connected to geographic location.

However, because so many of us are using Zoom, there are no longer any limits on where in the world we can reach to from our church on the corner. I recently received a request for membership from a person living three provinces away (but related to a current member).

The questions surrounding our long-held understanding of membership, community and participation have begun a process of reflection in our Session. Hoping to frame this process of reflection in a positive way that can inform other congregations, I will be exploring the topic in DMin studies at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, starting in July of 2021.

We Presbyterians believe that the church is "Semper Reformanda," always reforming, and I believe the Holy Spirit is doing just that during this ongoing health crisis. Do we have the courage to be church in a new, broader way?

I look forward to hearing from congregations across the country who would like to share their experiences of online worship participation and how they have welcomed new participants from around the globe. I can be reached at braesidepc@outlook.com.



A Conversation with the Creator

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

Creator: Hello, Vivian.

Me: Yes, how are you today?

Creator: I am fine. I have a path for you to walk on.

Me: Oh?

Creator: You've done well in your healing journey.

Me: Thank you.

Creator: See the path in front of you?

(I look to where He is pointing. It is very narrow. Rough and bumpy. Not straight.)

Creator: I see hesitation in your eyes.

Me: It looks too hard. Don't think I can walk that path. Do you have an easier path?

Creator: You have been given Gifts to help you on this path. Words of mouth that a needed messenger requires.

Me: I talk lots but it is more babbling than anything else.

Creator: You also have the Gift of pen and paper. The ability to write those spoken words that are around you.

Me: I see people with heavy burdens on their backs. I am still broken in some ways. How can I help them?

Creator: You know their tears. You have shed similar tears. You know

their pain. You have once carried the same burdens.

Me: I am still getting used to my emotions. The walls that I had to protect me are still at my feet.

Creator: And that is why you are chosen for this path.

Me: I will be alone on this path, but then again when have I not been alone in my troubled times?

Creator: You will not be alone. You have the Gift of friendship that will guide you and help you. People that you meet along the way.

Me: You speak of the Gifts that will help me on this difficult path. Why me?

Creator: I don't send the broken but a healing person to help those that are broken. To show what is possible. To show those broken walls at your feet. That they come down and feel those emotions without fear. To let them know of the Gifts that they have within them. To let them know they are not alone.

Me: I am scared. Of failure.

Creator: There will be times when you can rest. Rest, but not turn back. You will be guided. There is no failure when you are helping someone on this path.

(I stood before the path. Put my foot on it and looked ahead. Unsure, but I have to trust in the Creator. He has spoken of some of my Gifts to help me. I am told that I will discover more Gifts as I walk this path. I take another step.)

Creator: Walk lightly, Little One. I will be with you.



WOMEN



A woman in India and her child wearing a pneumonia vest, knitted by members of the Atlantic Mission Society.

Pneumonia Prevention Vests

By Joan Cho. This article first appeared in the Atlantic Mission Society's publication, The Presbyterian Message

Pneumonia prevention vests were first suggested in 1994 by Miriam Barrie while she and her husband, David, were mission volunteers in Malawi.

She saw babies and toddlers arriving at the Mulanje Mission Hospital with pneumonia. Because of poor nutrition, they had little resistance to fight infection and many times,

death was the result. Doctors told Miriam that keeping a baby's back and chest warm was a key factor in prevention.

The February 1994 edition of The Presbyterian Message first carried the pattern for pneumonia prevention vests. The project was embraced with enthusiasm and spread throughout the Atlantic Mission Society (AMS) and to friends across Canada, south to Texas and even east to Europe.

The pattern was printed again in 2004. Now in 2021, pneumonia prevention vests are still being knitted and distributed.

International Ministries has been providing the AMS with a grant of \$500 to help Presbyterials cover mailing costs. As our treasurer, Lillian Crawford, has often pointed out, actual mailing costs are much higher and were basically subsidized by AMS funds.

More than 25 years later, mailing costs continue to soar, both for the mailer and the recipient. Something that was intended as a blessing may now be a problem for those receiving parcels.

What is often forgotten is a point that Miriam made in 1994: "Malawian women also like to knit. Please send along a contribution with your vests, which will be used to supply women's groups with knitting yarn and needles they often cannot afford to buy."

In recent years, the AMS Executive has been encouraging knitters to consider the needs of the homeless and disadvantaged in our often-cold Canadian climate. Wise stewardship indicates sending only monetary gifts overseas.

National Presbyterian Women's Gathering: May 2022

By Cathy Reid, Presbyterian Women's Gathering Team Convener

Celebrate God. (Psalm 32:11a, The Message)

The time has come for us to celebrate! The Women's Missionary Society was disappointed that the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering in 2020 had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. After more than a year, we are now confident that the next

Women's Gathering can be held in person on May 21-22, 2022, at the Sheraton Parkway Hotel in Richmond Hill, Ont.

We will come together to celebrate and praise God for being with us throughout the pandemic, granting us strength and hope, and for teaching us to give thanks in all circumstances.

Scheduled guest speakers include:

 Susan Aglukark, Indigenous singer and advocate

- The Rev. Anna Carter Florence, Peter Marshall Professor of Preaching at Columbia Theological Seminary
- · Jennifer Henry, former Executive Director, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
- The Rev. Amanda Currie, former Moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

I hope you are as excited as I am. At last, we will come together and enjoy each other's company without social distancing—we can be ourselves once again and greet one another with our "normal" Christian love and fellowship.

Come and sing! Come and celebrate! The WMS Council Executive invites you to mark your calendars now and save the date. Information/ registration booklets will be sent out this September.

To learn more and register for updates, visit presbyterian.ca/gathering-2022.





Cathy Reid, Presbyterian Women's Gathering Team Convener

Norma Raynard receives an Honorary Life Membership Award from the Women's Missionary Society.

Honorary Life Membership Award

By Mae Raynard, daughter of Norma Raynard of Lucknow Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, Ont. Adapted from an article that first appeared in the Lucknow Sentinel

Norma Raynard, of Lucknow Presbyterian Church and the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) in Lucknow, Ont., ary Membership to the Maitland Presbyterial Women's Missionary Society at their annual meeting, which took place online on Feb. 24,

The Honorary Membership is a national award given to

members who have shown dedication to the WMS.

Norma was born in Wingham, Ont., and grew up with her parents, Cliff and Frances Murray and brother Donald on a farm in West Wawanosh, near St. Helens.

"My mother loved living on the farm with her family, which included her grandfather Murray, Aunt Mary Murrecently received an Honor- ray and Uncle Ross Murray," recounted Norma's daughter, Mae. "Grandmother Reid and several aunts, uncles and cousins lived close to the Murray farm with many visits back and forth over the years."

married Bruce Norma

Raynard in 1961 and raised Marian, Glenn, Mae and Brock on the family farm in West Wawanosh. Norma went to Stratford Teachers College and went on to teach at Howick and Purple Grove.

Within the WMS, she has taken on the role of president, pianist and historian, since becoming a member in 1971. She's helped organize Presbyterial and Synodical events and led many devotions and meetings over the

"I enjoyed helping to host Synodical in 2004 at Wingham and 2013 in Kincardine," said Norma. "Most recently, in October 2019,

Lucknow WMS hosted the Maitland Presbyterial Fall Rally. This meeting had fellowship, worship, prayers and service—the four foundations to our WMS purpose. The WMS enjoyed communion, presentation of Messy Church and a lovely lunch-

Norma is involved in both the church community and the local community, giving her time as a Sunday School teacher, organist and pianist at Erskine Presbyterian Church and Lucknow Presbyterian Church, where she was also the music director. She has also been an involved member at Zion

United Church.

Some changes she has noticed over the years within the WMS is that the number of participants in the local, Presbyterial, Synodical and national levels has decreased while the need for missions in Canada and abroad increases.

"I've seen many groups disband over the many years I've been involved." said Norma. "In 1971, we had over 17 groups in our Presbyterial and now we only have six groups."

Norma says she plans to continue her involvement with the WMS for as long as she is able.

























UPDATES

Combatting Healthcare Worker Burnout at Crieff Hills



Hannah Currie, neonatal intensive care unit nurse.

By Kristine O'Brien, Executive Director, Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre in Puslinch, Ont.

Frontline healthcare workers are overwhelmed and exhausted. Long hours, limited resources and the

constant fear created by COVID-19 have left Ontario medical and support staff in desperate need of a break. When the one-year anniversary of the pandemic approached, staff at Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre near Guelph, Ont., began to wonder what they could do to help. I came up with the idea of a retreat giveaway. Our mission is to provide opportunities for rest and renewal, and who deserves that more than those who have been working so hard and making such huge personal sacrifices?

The Frontline Heath-Care Worker Giveaway was created to provide an all-expenses paid weekend away in a private cottage with gourmet meals. Through social media, we asked the community to nominate their friends, family members or co-workers on the frontlines who deserve a break.

The stories were submitted privately but were poignant. I was very moved by the number of people who were offering extraordinary service while juggling the needs of their own children and elderly parents. Some were even volunteering in their community during their off-hours. Nominations closed on March 31.

At first, Crieff Hills planned to give away just one retreat. But when we promised to match every \$250 donation to give away another weekend, the response was swift and there have now been so many donors that we have given away 13 retreats. One recipient, Hannah Currie, is a Registered Nurse in the NICU in a London, Ont., hospital. She says it's been a difficult year and is grateful to be the recipient of such kindness.

For more information about Crieff Hills Retreat Centre, visit crieffhills.com.

Ecumenical Chaplain at the University of Saskatchewan

By the Rev. Dr. Kathleen James-Cavan, Chair, Ecumenical Chaplaincy Board

The Ecumenical Chaplaincy at the University of Saskatchewan, a cooperative ministry of the Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches, is pleased to announce the appointment of the Rev. George Hind as chaplain for the coming months.

The Rev. George has been serving as university chaplain, based at the Lutheran Campus Centre, since August 2017, and after consultation with the Lutheran Synod of Saskatchewan, he has agreed to take on this new shared role, serving also as Ecumenical Chaplain on campus. We are happy to be part of ensuring



this half-time position in ministry to students, staff and faculty at the university.

Learn about Lutheran Campus Ministry and the work of the Rev. George Hind at lutherancampusministry.sk.ca

PULPIT VACANCIES

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

Calgary, St. Andrew's (full-time associate minister of Growth & Care) – Alberta & the Northwest

Lethbridge, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Alberta & the Northwest Fredericton, St. Andrew's (full-time

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

minister) – British Columbia **Prince George. St. Giles** (full-time

Prince George, St. Giles (full-time minister) – British Columbia

Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont. (full-time associate minister for Children and Families) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Brampton, **Heart Lake Community** (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Elmvale, Elmvale and Knox Flos (full-time minister, 2-point charge) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Lakefield, St. Andrew's, Knox (60%-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Milton, Knox (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

North York, University (part-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Orillia, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Scarborough, Guildwood Community (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Toronto, Chinese (full-time minister)

– Central, Northeastern Ontario &
Bermuda

Toronto, Formosan (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Toronto, Mimico (75%-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Toronto, Trinity Mandarin (part-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Toronto, York Memorial (half-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Kenora, First (full-time minister) – Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario

Thunder Bay, Lakeview (fulltime minister) – Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario

Arnprior, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Laval, Ghanaian Presbyterian Church of Montreal (full-time minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario Montreal, Presbyterian Church of the Town of Mount Royal (60%time minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Montreal, Snowdon Korean (fulltime minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Montreal, Taiwanese Robert Campbell (full-time minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario

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

Perth, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Dundas, West Flamboro (80%-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

Durham, Durham Presbyterian (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

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

Niagara Falls, Chippawa (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

North Yarmouth, St. James (part-time or student minister) – Southwestern Ontario

Point Edward, Point Edward (half-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

DEATH NOTICES

Read all full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

The Rev. Gerald Rennie Oangeville, Ont. Deceased May 21, 2021

The Rev. Dr. Joseph Pungur Edmonton, Alta. Deceased May 9, 2021

Robert Allan Jellous London, Ont. Deceased April 21, 2021

The Rev. James McVeigh Wasaga Beach, Ont. Deceased April 5, 2021

The Rev. Dr. Harry Kuntz Pointe-Claire, Que. Deceased April 3, 2021

The Rev. David Stewart St. Thomas, Ont. Deceased March 25, 2021

The Rev. Dr. Stanley Cox Hamilton, Ont. Deceased March 24, 2021 The Rev. Patricia Hanna Toronto, Ont. Deceased March 16, 2021

Linda Susanne Saunders Mississauga, Ont. Deceased March 10, 2021

The Rev. Dr. Robert J. Bernhardt Hamilton, Ont. Deceased March 3, 2021

The Rev. Robert ReidToronto, Ont.
Deceased February 21, 2021

Margaret Mooney Amherstview, Ont. Deceased February 18, 2021

Zena Elizabeth Mackay Burnaby, B.C. Deceased January 31, 2021

Doreen Beaton Harrow, Ont. Deceased December 18, 2020

Thorold, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

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

Woodstock, Knox (full-time minister)

– Southwestern Ontario

JUST WONDERING...





A few years ago, General Assembly said that people could say how they felt about proposed changes to the church's rules about marriage. What happened to that report? Will we ever hear what the results were?

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

In 2019, the General Assembly asked the Life and Mission Agency to provide a way for those affected to express their concerns, views and pain related to the proposed remits about sexuality and that the concerns be reported to the Assembly before the report on remits was received and considered.

People were invited to share their thoughts in writing, by email, over the phone, online and in person. The information that was received reflected the participation of an estimated 3,000 people who expressed their thoughts to some extent in some form. The final report can be found in the Life and Mission Agency report (found at presbyterian.ca/ga2021) under the heading Feedback about Remit B and Remit C Proposing Changes to Church Law and Doctrine Pertaining to Marriage and Ordination.

The thoughts and feelings that were collected presented a picture of church that is diverse. There are various beliefs about God's intentions concerning human sexuality and marriage, and about the people whom Christ calls into ministry. There are different interpretations of scripture and the way it should guide Christian life. People are discerning different answers to central discipleship questions: What does the gospel mandate to love look like in this context? What is just? What is true? What would Jesus do? People also expressed differences in their level of conviction; some are strongly formed in their views, while others indicated that they are less sure, still questioning. Differences were observed in the varying attitudes that people revealed toward those voicing dif-



ferent views from their own. Some participants described how they maintained feelings of Christian love, respect and prayerfulness for the people who disagreed with them; other participants indicated that they felt contempt, anger and embarrassment for the people whom they regarded as opponents.

The differences expressed in the listening process present a picture of church that is complex. The role of the presbyteries in voting either to approve or to disapprove the remits could lead to the unfounded belief that the church divided in two distinct groups, each group united by a common heart and mind. In fact, the information collected in the listening process does not support this expectation. Rather, the church is not made up of two groups holding opposing views. The reality is very much more complex and opinions on this matter, as on all others, are diverse.

Differences across the church do not comprise the entire picture presented by the information collected in the listening process. In fact, one striking impression is just how much is shared by people affirming an entire constellation of viewpoints. For instance, we all value love for and devotion to God, following Jesus, reliance on the Holy Spirit, honouring scripture, love for the church and concern for its welfare, love for congregations, commitment to mission, and concern for the nature and fruitfulness of the church's witness to the love of Christ.

The feedback highlighted two other matters. The first is a pressing need for caring, wise and insightful pastoral care for many people who hold a variety of views. Another need evident from the collected information is for the church, through its ministers and committees, to provide education. Sometimes it was possible to see that strong feelings, concerns and views were based upon inaccurate assumptions. Comments, both oral and written, revealed widespread lack of knowledge about matters such as church polity and church history as well as the church's doctrinal understanding of such matters as marriage, sexuality and the scriptures. This reality undoubtedly has hampered the church's discussions on sexuality generally and on Remit B and Remit C specifically. Among other things, misunderstandings and inaccuracies have added to and caused some of the mistrust and pain that some people said they felt.





Can we change, add verses or alter the words of a hymn or praise song?

Answered by Canadian Ministries

If the words of a song or hymn are copyrighted, the text cannot be changed without the permission of the copyright holder. While changing the words of a hymn or adding a verse may seem insignificant, changing the lyrics without permission will put you in violation of copyright and could lead to legal repercussions.

However, things are different for hymns or songs in the public domain. Some music leaders change the lyrics of hymns in the public domain to make the language of the songs reflective of their context or easier to under-

stand. For instance, there are obvious benefits to changing "By Cool Siloam's Shady Rill" to "By Cool Siloam's Shady Pool." Even though the verses of the hymn no longer rhyme as they used to, at least the singers know what they are singing about. And it may make lots of sense to change "shouldst" to "should," and "thy" to "your" or to "God's" if it clarifies the meaning of the hymn, nurtures the singer's understanding and still scans well within the metre of the music.

This is a permitted practice with hymns in the public domain, but, as already mentioned, it is not permitted with hymns that are copyrighted

We are planning a service to welcome our new minister to our church. It says that we are supposed to have two sermons. Why is one called a sermon and one is called a charge? What's the difference and do we have to do both? Help!

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

An Induction is a worship service planned and led by the presbytery that marks the official beginning of a new pastoral relationship between a minister and congregation. Induction services contain many elements, including vows that the minister and the members of the congregation make about their faith and the new relationship that will exist between the congregation and the minister. As in any service of worship, there should be a sermon. The sermon is preached for the benefit of everyone who has gathered for worship and is a thoughtful meditation based on informed and careful interpretations of scripture. A sermon is meant

to teach, inspire and nurture faith generally among God's people. It is also customary at Inductions for the minister (and sometimes the congregation) to be "charged" by a member of the presbytery. A Charge, unlike the sermon, is addressed directly to the newly ordained and inducted minister and often to the members of the congregation.

A Charge is different from a sermon in that it is usually wise counsel and encouragement for how to begin and practice ministry in a robust, resilient and faithful way in the unique context of the congregation into which the new minister is being inducted. A sermon is essential at an Induction; a separate Charge is optional and may incorporated into the sermon, depending upon the practice and wisdom of the presbytery.



JUST WONDERING...

What's the difference between an "interim moderator" and an "interim minister?"

Answered by the Rev. Tim Purvis, Associate Secretary, Ministry and Church Vocations

An *interim moderator* is a minister appointed by presbytery to be moderator of Session in a congregation where there is a pulpit vacancy and therefore no called and inducted minister. During a typical pulpit vacancy, the interim moderator would moderate Session meetings, arrange for pulpit supply, pastoral care, and in general oversee the work of the congregation during the vacancy. The interim moderator would also guide the search committee in the process of seeking to call a new minister to fill the pulpit vacancy.

Sometimes a presbytery determines that a vacant congregation (with an interim moderator) needs some time before it is in a position to extend a call to a new minister. Perhaps there's been conflict between the congregation and the former minister leading to presbytery intervention and a decision to dissolve the pastoral tie. Perhaps the congregation has a history of short-term pastorates that have not

ended well. Perhaps the congregation is grieving the departure of a much-loved minister who has served for many years. Whatever the case, presbytery decides the congregation needs some time before it can call a new minister. In those instances, presbytery may mandate a period of intentional interim ministry under a qualified interim minister. An interim minister is a minister with particular gifts, skills and training who is appointed by presbytery for a specific term (usually one, but sometimes two years) to work with a vacant congregation in order to assist it in dealing with its issues.

Once presbytery decides the congregation will have an interim minister, the interim moderator begins the process of working with Session to find an interim minister; to develop the interim ministry covenant setting forth the goals and tasks of the interim ministry; and to draw up the terms of the interim ministry agreement for presbytery's approval. The interim moderator also makes progress reports to presbytery on the interim ministry throughout its term.

We are having a debate in our Session about who should be allowed to have communion. We are also trying to decide who is allowed to serve the bread and juice at communion. What are the church's policies?

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

A Catechism for Today, a document that The Presbyterian Church in Canada published in 2006, says that "All those who love the Lord Jesus and belong to any Christian church may participate [in the Lord's Supper]. We come to the Lord's table not because any individual goodness gives us a right to come, but because Christ welcomes us. He loved us, gave himself for us, and invites us to receive his body and blood to our spiritual nourishment and growth

in grace." All baptized children, if their parents approve and the Session welcomes children at the Table, may be invited to participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion. While it is the tradition in many congregations for the minister and/or elders to serve the communion elements (bread and wine/juice), there are no rules outlining who must or must not serve the communion elements. However, it would be advisable that the servers be among those who are participants in the sacrament and that they be equipped to serve the elements in hospitable and thoughtful ways.





"I've started to notice people writing things like (she/her) or (they/them) in their email signature or after their display name on Zoom calls. What does this mean and why are they doing it?"

Answered by Carragh Erhardt, Sexuality & Inclusion Program Coordinator

What you are noticing is people choosing to share their pronouns. One of the main ways we use pronouns is to refer to people without repeating their names. When talking about one person, the most common pronouns are she/her, he/him and they/them.

More people share their pronouns when introducing themselves, in email signatures or in their display name on platforms like Zoom, to help other people know how to refer to them. While it may seem like you can know what pronouns someone uses based on their name or appearance alone, these assumptions can be inaccurate and harmful, especially for people whose pronouns are often disrespected whether intentionally or unintentionally.

For many people, pronouns are a way of expressing their gender; however, this isn't always the case. Some people ask to be referred to by their name instead of pronouns. Remember that while pronouns, like our names, are information that we often share publicly so people can refer to us accurately and respectfully, our sense of gender may be more private and nuanced than what we choose to share with other people.

Cisgender (see below) people often have their pronouns used consistently and without pushback even when someone initially assumes their pronouns incorrectly. For instance, can you remember a time when you guessed someone's pronouns wrong over email? It may have been embarrassing to be corrected for a moment but then you likely corrected yourself in later conversations.

Transgender (see below) and non-binary people (see below) are more likely to have their pronouns assumed incorrectly or, when they share their pronouns, are often dismissed or subjected to invasive questions or statements

about their gender identity.

Adopting the practice of inviting people to share their pronouns, and ensuring that pronouns are respected, is one way that church groups can work toward being more welcoming and loving to transgender and non-binary people. Especially for leaders, it is helpful to think through what to do if you notice someone make a mistake in the pronouns they use for someone else. Learning to offer correction with grace is a good way to model respect in your community.

To learn more about pronouns and how to respond when mistakes are made, I recommend the website mypronouns.org.

Definitions:

Gender refers to a set of social, psychological and/or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that inform one's sense of being a woman, a man, a mixture of both or neither. Gender expression is the way individuals outwardly present those traits, for example through clothes, hair styles, makeup, etc.

Transgender is an umbrella term that refers to people who do not identify either fully or in part with the gender associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Cisgender is a term that refers to people whose gender identity aligns with the one typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Non-binary is an umbrella term used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between or a combination of man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms.