



Indian Residential Schools, Systemic Racism, Unmarked Graves and the Church

By Justice Ministries

The recent news of more than a thousand unmarked graves associated with former Indian Residential School sites has devastated communities across Canada. For many non-Indigenous people this has been shocking news, but it has only confirmed what Indigenous communities have long said. While people struggle to confront the grim reality of these schools and their legacy, some of the frequent questions being asked are: “How could the church have done this?” “Are there unmarked graves at PCC-run schools, too?” and “What can we do now to repent and work towards healing the harm we caused?”

The answer to the first two questions is found in our—Canada’s and the church’s—colonial roots. The answer to the third question begins by working to redress and dismantle

the harms of colonialism—a process known as decolonization.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada operated 11 Residential Schools as part of an organized project of colonization and assimilation in which the federal government and other churches also participated. As the graves already found demonstrate, this project of colonization and assimilation is genocide. As of writing, we do not know if there are unmarked graves at PCC-run schools, though the reality is that it is likely, and we know students died at the 11 schools we ran. There is a video recording discussing this reality at presbyterian.ca/residential-schools-video.

The PCC is committed to uncovering the truth of how many children did not make it home from the schools we ran, but this process must be done in consultation with the communities impacted and in full

accordance with their wishes.

To understand what moved the church to participate in this genocide—and how to work to dismantle these destructive structures—it is important to understand the ideology

that shaped the church’s interactions with Indigenous people. That ideology is systemic racism and exploitation growing out of what is commonly called the Doctrine of Discovery.

The Doctrine of Discovery is a set

of Papal decrees from the late 14th and early 15th centuries proclaiming church support for colonization. The decrees gave explicit permission to several European monarchs to forcibly take land not occupied by Christians and also included permissions to exploit and abuse non-Christian peoples, granting for example “full and free power, through the Apostolic authority by this edict, to invade, conquer, fight [and] subjugate the Saracens and pagans, and other infidels and other enemies of Christ... and to lead their persons in perpetual servitude, and to apply and appropriate [their] realms...possessions and goods to this kind to you and your use and your successors” (Pope Nicholas V, *Dum Diversas*, 1452). This way of thinking was reiterated in 1493 by Pope Alexander VI, who “gave” the lands “to the West and

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The Presbyterian Church in Canada operated 11 Residential Schools:

Ahousaht Residential School in British Columbia
Alberni Residential School in British Columbia
Birtle Residential School in Manitoba
Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, first located in Shoal Lake, Ontario, and relocated to Kenora, Ontario
Crowstand Residential School in Saskatchewan
File Hills Residential School in Saskatchewan
Muscowpetung (later known as “Lakesend”) Residential School in Saskatchewan
Portage la Prairie Residential School in Manitoba
Regina Industrial School in Saskatchewan
Round Lake Residential School in Saskatchewan
Stoney Plain Residential School in Alberta

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for Hope

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

“Setting Right”: Put Your Hand in the Hand



The Rev. Dr. Daniel D. Scott, Moderator of the 2021 General Assembly

When my daughter was quite small, I was walking with her on the sidewalk in front of the manse. She was holding my hand with her little hand, but really I was holding on to her. I'm not sure if she tried to dart away or if she just slipped. I remember holding her hand tightly, afraid she might fall into the street and get hit by a car. I realized something had happened when she let out an ear-piercing scream. Her elbow had dislocated.

My wife wrapped her in a blanket, and I whisked her off to Southlake Hospital. A young resident came and asked my daughter to sit on the examining table. He asked if she liked popsicles and when she nodded yes, he went and got one. The doctor asked if he could examine her arm and she nodded. He quickly popped it back into place and put the popsicle in her mouth before she could even cry out. He asked if she was okay and with tear-filled eyes she nodded yes.

Satisfied that everything was in order, we were let go and advised that her elbow may dislocate again at times, but it was easy to set right.

Fortunately, it only ever happened once after that.

I understand that the Greek word used often in the New Testament for “correct” or “reprove” has its background in medicine. It refers to the setting right of a bone.

This Greek word *elencto*, from which J. H. Bavinck, Dutch missionary to Indonesia, developed his missionary approach known as *elenctics*, is used throughout the New Testament for believers as well, saying that they too need to be corrected or “set right.” Paul to Timothy (2:42) wrote: “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; set right, rebuke and encourage—with great patience” and to the young Titus (2:15) said: “These... are the things you should teach. Encourage and set right with all authority.” John in the book of Revelation writes, “those whom I love I rebuke and set right.”

At the recent General Assembly, there were several items that suggested The Presbyterian Church in Canada has some “setting right” to do.

Even before the Assembly could turn to deal with matters that needed to be corrected, unmarked graves were discovered at a Residential School in Kamloops, B.C. A service of prayers of confession, silence and lament took place during General Assembly, and once again the church committed to make right the historic wrongs of the Residential Schools in a document signed by two moderators (see page 5).

Our interfaith guest to the Assembly was from the Muslim-Christian Association. His community was reeling from the news of a senseless and malicious killing of a Muslim family in London, Ont. It suggested that in welcoming our Islamic friends and neighbours, there is much that

still needs to be set right.

For four years, the Rainbow Communion has been listening to stories of harm done by the church to LGT-BQI members. The report and its recommendations included expressions and actions of repentance and apology, but also concrete steps—revision of theological school curricula, training documents for churches and courts, provision of funds for counselling, etc.—to ensure things are set right.

The Assembly asked that several letters be written to various public officials about many important items. One of these issues relates to the care of creation and the environment. We've not always attended to the care of the world, and this too needs to be set right.

There were other items, some tucked into omnibus motions that recognize there are things that need correction. For example, a clear statement was produced by the Life and Mission Agency dealing with physical punishment of children.

A few weeks before the first lockdown, I attended “An Evening with John Irving” in Uxbridge, Ont. I am a big fan of his novels—especially *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, which I think is one of the best books on call, vocation and the riddle of our existence. Terrence Des Pres writes that, “Novel by novel, Irving has moved steadily toward more intimate knowledge of this sinister energy...life's demonic undertow at exactly those points where, any day, any one of us might slip and be sucked down.” Irving recognizes in his books that these forces need to be set right.

So, too, did our Lord Jesus. When Peter's mother-in-law suffered from a fever, Jesus “rebuked” the illness and “it left her” (Luke 4:39). When Jesus and his disciples were at sea



and a severe storm endangered the ship, Jesus “rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’” (Mark 4:39). We are all affected by the undertows of mysterious diseases and awesome storms. We need the power of Jesus to set things right.

Throughout the Assembly, the commissioners were led in prayers including the saying of the Lord's Prayer. We didn't use the version included in Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, but we could have. It goes like this:

Our Father in heaven,
 Reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
 Do what's best—
 as above, so below.
 Keep us alive with three square meals.
 Keep us forgiven with you and for-

giving others.
 Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.
 You're in charge!
 You can do anything you want!
 You're ablaze in beauty!
 Yes. Yes. Yes.

In setting the world right, our prayers may be answered by the work that we do together as The Presbyterian Church in Canada, especially when it comes to many of the social issues of today. However, we must never forget that it is ultimately God who sets the world right through Jesus Christ.

Like the song that Anne Murray used to sing, we need to be reminded: “Put your hand in the hand of the man who stilled the water... who calmed the sea...the man from Galilee.”

Oops!

In the Summer 2021 edition a piece of text was cut off on page 43 in the Just Wondering section. For clarity, the full answer is provided here and can also be found in the online version of the newspaper at presbyterian.ca/connection.

Can we change, add verses or alter the words of a hymn or praise song?

If the words of a song or hymn are copyrighted, the text cannot be changed without the permission of the copyright holder. While chang-

ing 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 understand. 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.



RECONCILIATION

Working towards healing the harm caused by the church

Continued from page 1

First 215 and then
751 more
It's not shocking but it is traumatizing for the people I serve
and it is impacting me intensely.
The good? Our whispered knowing is finely being proven.

Open your mind, the truth needs to be known and
accepted and deeply lamented.
Accountability must be demanded.
Justice must be seen in action.
All Presbyterians inherit this legacy.

Indigenous Presbyterians and their Allies must all hold
Church and Government accountable to do the right thing.
Find the children, identify the children, get them home,
don't stop until they all are found.

Make sure there are enough resources given to your
Indigenous missions and ministries to
Help our Indigenous people...
Heal.

Help Indigenous communities to
restore the languages beaten out of our Elders,
restore our relationship with Creator,
recover our cultural identity,
restore our Spiritual way of life, practices, and ceremony.
We are intelligent enough, and strong enough to do that ourselves.
We do not have the finances required to do a good job.
In exchange for the land that was stolen, honour the treaties!
Give us a fair portion of what the land produces.
Pay the rent you owe.
Ensure every single Indigenous person living in poverty
is gifted with an ongoing acceptable living allowance.
Clear the way for free access to education
for all Indigenous people regardless of age or academic level.
Stop incarcerating Indigenous people
and fund Indigenous-led restorative Justice programs.
Stop tolerating systemic racism in the
health-care system,
education system,
legal system,
political system,
social welfare system,
Child and Family, foster care, and adoption agencies.
And in society in general.

With a heavy heart I say Meegwetch and
Thank you for listening.
All my relations.

—Thundering Eagle Woman, the Rev. Margaret Mullin, Place
of Hope Indigenous Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man.,
Treaty 1 Territory, homeland of the Cree, Anishinaabe and
Dakota Peoples and homeland of the Métis Nation

South" (both North and South America) to the Spanish monarchs.

The Doctrine of Discovery codified belief in the supremacy of Christian European culture and empires. Later, other colonial powers such as England and France drew on this way of thinking to establish their own claims—and after the Reformation, this way of thinking continued to shape Protestant churches as well. These beliefs about how non-Europeans and non-Christians could be exploited and were in need of Christianizing (understood in a very specific European cultural way) accompanied Christian settlers, and Christian missionaries, into the lands we now call Canada. As just one example, take the words of the Rev. James Nisbet, a Presbyterian missionary, to the "Sabbath schools." He stated that simply seeing the work going on at the mission "must fill them [Indigenous people] with an idea of the superiority of the white people, and that may induce them to think well also of the religion white people bring to them." (Letter from the Rev. James Nisbet, September 1869; The Home and Foreign Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church, No. 3, Vol IX, Presbyterian Church Archives.)

These words may seem shocking, but the Rev. Nisbet was not an outlier. He was expressing beliefs commonly held by many Christians at the time. Yet it is clear his words espouse white supremacy—a sin and ideology the church has since rejected as "a blatant denial of the Christian faith" (A&P 1972, pp. 269–270, 59). Colonialism and the racism that underlies it are incompatible with the gospel and yet, as we see from church history, both have significantly shaped how the church understood mission. The church must therefore expose and change how its understanding of the Bible, and relationships with Indigenous peoples, have been harmfully, culturally conditioned. Discipleship requires no less.

In 1994, the PCC confessed its role in running Residential Schools, and in 2019, the General Assembly repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery. Neither of those actions, however necessary, undoes what has already happened. Apologies and repudiations of the ideologies that framed colonialism do not undo the reality of children's graves, both marked and unmarked, associated with Residential Schools. They don't undo the devastating harms and intergenerational trauma the schools and other forms of colonialism caused. And so, part of discipleship today is working to dismantle the structures that al-

lowed such things, and redressing the harms that have come of them.

Since its 1994 Confession, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been learning how to work for reconciliation, but we know it will take time. Generations of Indigenous people have been harmed; it will take generations of hard work for healing to redress that harm. The PCC took another step in that direction this June, issuing a public statement of commitments to reconciliation—including making funds available (see presbyterian.ca/indigenous-fund) to help Indigenous communities search school grounds, as well as providing support for dealing with the trauma that the findings trigger. You can read those commitments and learn about other steps towards reconciliation the PCC is taking at presbyterian.ca/indigenous-justice. Resources for deepening one's understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery, how the PCC engaged in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's process, links to learn more about Residential Schools the PCC ran, and study guides to engage topics such as our Confession or the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls are also available.

Understanding that the church has caused deep pain and harm, we must listen, repent and centre the wishes and guidance of Indigenous communities and families impacted by our actions. To echo what many Indigenous people are saying in light of the discovery of more and more graves—some of which are likely to be found on the grounds of Presbyterian-run schools—healing must come before reconciliation.

To learn more, see presbyterian.ca/indigenous-justice or contact Justice Ministries.



Presbyterians
Sharing supports
Indigenous ministries
as the PCC works
towards healing and
reconciliation with
Indigenous people.



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The Rev. Dr. Daniel D. Scott

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.



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RECONCILIATION

Each One of Us Matters

By Yaxšiqiml (Natika Bock) on the Traditional and Unceded Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Territory. The Secwépemc maintain a spiritual and practical relationship to the land, water, air, animals, plants and all things needed for life. Natika is a student at Vancouver School of Theology/St. Andrew's Hall and is a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kamloops, B.C.

The Sacred Fire at Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (TteS) burned for four days and was extinguished on May 31, 2021, after the last logs were placed by Fire Keepers at 5 p.m. Left to burn down carefully, the Keepers kept ceremonial watch as the coals embered to ash. Still today, several months later, visitors come daily to mourn, bring gifts and weep the lost 215 First Nations children that were recently found buried in unmarked graves. By way of ground-penetrating radar, the stories of these burials were confirmed, but there is still so much more work to be done and it is predicted that many more graves will be located, as only two of the six hundred acres of land were investigated. On July 15, 2021, the public report of the findings at TteS were shared and it was stated clearly that we need to avoid regarding these “discoveries” as authenticated by science, but instead, realize these unmarked graves were remembered by Survivors and documented throughout the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report.

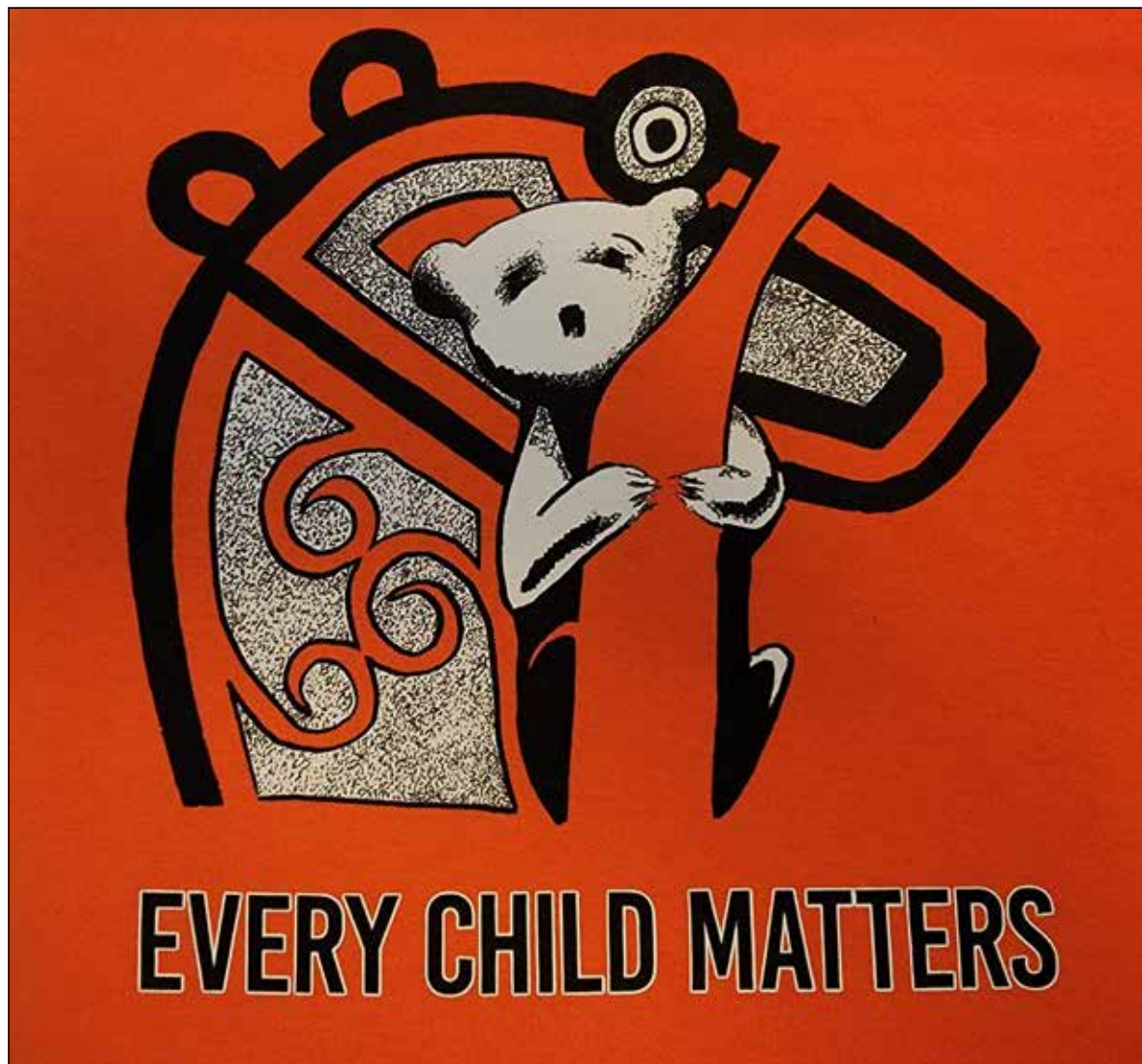
The orchard where these children were detected is only a quick saunter from the Red Brick Building, previously known as Kamloops Indian Residential School (KIRS). I work at ground zero on the girls' side, in the basement of KIRS. KIRS and the previous Day School both remain standing and have been renovated to accommodate over 240 TteS Band Staff. During the work week, we occupy these spaces even while ceremonies of grief and healing are carried out. During one of these ceremonies, a shocking photo was taken of eerie figures standing in one of the windows. Social media carried this image exponentially through its viral interweb, but as it turned out, the picture was not of ghosts, but rather of TteS staff observing the gathering out their work window. It was shared with staff that these children are now in our care, and it is our duty to honour them in the best ways we can.

With that, several wooden crosses have been erected along the shoulder of the highway, pageanting weathered, sun-scorched orange articles of children's clothing. As we arrive to work, the power of orange and crosses, pronounced on unceded, stolen land, is sobering.

Many of my co-workers are intergenerational Survivors of KIRS and hold stories too grim and triggering to share. All of us staff have had our own personal experiences of being “ghosted” in our offices and about a year ago I wrote one of my first seminary papers of various KIRS spirit encounters. Be assured that whenever one of us gets spooked, with grace my co-worker gently reminds us to say a small prayer to the little ones who are trying to get home. This was the lesson her late mother, a KIRS Survivor, passed on to her.

I write this cautiously, aware of my own tender emotions and the responsibilities that I carry as an active member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kamloops, as a seminary student of St. Andrew's Hall and Vancouver School of Theology, as a mother and partner of intergenerational Residential School Survivors, and as an Indigenous guest working at TteS. To maintain and respect these various duties in a good way sometimes feels more like a burden than a gift. Yes, remorse and apologies are necessary, but don't forget that Canadians are known worldwide to apologize a lot. Recently, I was in a meeting where a revered Elder asked, “Why would we trust an apology, especially from a Canadian?”

I'm not sure whether we enter the Garden or the Wilderness when we are baptized, but I have observed that just when I think that we—a collective of Reformed Christians—have a better sense of the direction we are heading in, the Spirit reveals another gouge of brokenness. By way of ineffable Indigenous truths and testimony, the urgency for reconciliation wails in all four directions. Speaking once and listening twice, here we meet again, six years after the completion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and this time we absolutely cannot deny that merciless soil is packed under some of our forefathers' fingernails. More investigations for buried bodies will inevitably proceed, and trust that Presbyterians will need to be accountable to more buried children.



An orange T-shirt by artist Mike Alexander, an Anishinaabe from Swan Lake, Man.

This issue is personal to me, as both the Presbyterian and United Church controlled the operations of Alberni Indian Residential School, the institution that bequeathed my girl into the legacy as a third-generation Survivor.

Extending ourselves only through thoughts and prayers to the hurt, traumatized, distant and dissimilar causes more harm than good and undermines our service to God. According to the Medicine Wheel teachings, spirituality is only one quadrant of the round. A healthy expression of self—in this case, as part of the unified body of Christ—includes not only the spiritual, but also the emotional, mental and physical aspects of identity. As Christ-followers, we are aware that Jesus not only prayed, but also exercised and expressed his full-spectrum of humanness. Jesus showed up again and again. Though the Medicine Wheel is not a Christian ideology per se, it does bear weight to someone like me, as well as the established PCC Ministries with Indigenous People. Plus, the Medicine Wheel is a model that is appropriated often, even within our own Presbyterian tradition, and many Indigenous Christians use the teachings to activate their veneration, communities and ministries. Many of us have known the Medicine Wheel our whole lives and as righteous children of God, each one of us matters.

Since the findings of the First Na-

tions children at TteS, so many more unmarked graves have been found across Turtle Island. I won't include a number here, as I am sure this figure will be higher by the time this article is published. I also want to add that since these findings, both British Columbia and the Chiefs of the Secwépemc Nation have declared a State of Emergency due to the wildfires. TteS serves as a main evacuation site where staff and volunteers are working around the clock to take care of evacuees. There has literally been no relief, no respite, not since the beginning of COVID-19. The community is exhausted as crises and trauma that follow continue to mount. Lord, have mercy. Lord, be with us.

Injustice never lays low and will continue to circle back each season, with more potency and fortitude, until justice prevails. These findings are serious and are our cue to knuckle down, quit chattering and start examining the long-detailed list of unfinished business and promises that we have made, but have not delivered. The TRC Calls to Action were clear and there is no need to continue to unpack what reconciliation means to each of us personally, but rather we must follow the guidelines that were laid out six years ago by lawmakers, professionals, Survivors, church leaders and decision makers. And rest assured that the better way forward for all of us will be guided by

the Creator's radiance and light that reflects everyone, including the ones we have intentionally or unintentionally sinned against. The time to live in true fellowship is now—after all, the lifelong dowry of God's illumination is witness. For better or for worse, as Christians, our primary identity is in our baptism and, as intentional members of the Reformed tradition, we have a commitment to being reformed and reforming according to the Word of God.

I leave you to ponder these questions:

1. Is your church working towards realizing the Calls to Action as vowed by the PCC? (These actions are #s 46, 48, 49, 59, 60, 61, 73, 74, 75.) Visit presbyterian.ca/healing/trc-calls-to-action
2. Is your church ready to implement the relevant Calls to Action? Why or why not?
3. Has your church reached out to your Indigenous members and/or local Indigenous communities to offer support and resources?
4. Has your church and church community met and discussed these findings at TteS and across Turtle Island?
5. Is your church preparing for the time when unmarked graves are found in either your community and/or on a previous Residential School site that was operated by your Christian denomination?

RECONCILIATION

A Joint Statement from the Current and Former Moderator

By the Rev. Dr. Daniel D. Scott,
Moderator, 2021 General Assembly
and the Rev. Amanda Currie,
Moderator, 2019 General Assembly

We issue this statement of repentance and commitment to action today, aware of our own responsibility with regard to the sin of colonialism and our operation of Residential Schools, both of which we recognize today as instruments of a genocide against Indigenous people in what is today called Canada. The devastating revelation of 215 unmarked graves on the grounds of Kamloops Residential School in British Columbia leads the church to a time of listening to learn what is needed to continue its work of reconciliation, and so we have prepared this statement in consultation with the National Indigenous Ministry Council of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We also offer lament, in humility, for the lives of all the children who were lost; those we already knew, those who were just found, and any more still to be found.

Living Faith reminds us that God is always calling us to seek justice in the world, and that justice is seen when we strive to change customs that oppress and enslave, when we protect the rights of others and protest anything that destroys human dignity (8.4.1-3). Justice requires commitment and action. In 2019, The Presbyterian Church in Canada repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*—major components of colonialism—and in 2016 we committed ourselves to The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation. It is in acknowledging these requirements and calls of our faith that the church commits itself to the work and repentance named here.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada operated 11 Residential Schools for Indigenous children, with the first opening in the mid-1880s. The names of those schools are: Ahousaht Residential School in British Columbia; Alberni Residential School in British Columbia; Birtle Residential School in Manitoba; Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, first located in Shoal Lake, Ontario, and relocated to Kenora, Ontario; Crowstand Residential School in Saskatchewan; File Hills Residential School in Saskatchewan; Muscowpetung (later known as “Lakesend”) Residential School in Saskatchewan;

Portage la Prairie Residential School in Manitoba; Regina Industrial School in Saskatchewan; Round Lake Residential School in Saskatchewan; and Stoney Plain Residential School in Alberta. In 1925, all but two of the schools that were still open were transferred to the United Church of Canada, which was established as a result of the Church Union Movement. The two schools the PCC continued to operate after 1925 were Birtle Residential School and Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School. Though the church first offered formal apology and confession to God and to Indigenous peoples in 1994 for our role in running these schools—places from which many students never returned and which caused emotional scars and trauma on generations of Indigenous communities—the harm from these schools and other colonial practices continues today, and so too does our need for confessing.

Meaningful apology and the reconciliation that can come from it requires listening to the Indigenous communities and families we have harmed, asking what work is needed for healing, and then acting on it. The work that is required will change over time, as circumstances change; as more information is uncovered that may reopen wounds; as the depth of harm of colonialism is understood; as ways are found where the church can be an ally and a voice for justice again. The work required will change too as healing happens.

The listening required is also not a one-time event, but part of a relationship that develops over time. In listening, we have heard that even the children or grandchildren of those who attended Indian Residential Schools are more likely to have serious physical or mental health concerns, more likely to be taken from their homes into foster care, and more likely to attempt suicide than Indigenous children who do not have a parent or grandparent that attended Residential School. This is because of intergenerational trauma, that can cause cycles of harm and broken relationships in families, if not healed.

Hearing this, we have asked what we could do that would help heal that trauma; reconciliation requires no less. And in conversations with Indigenous members of this community, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, we have heard what is needed today:

We have heard The Presbyterian



The marker honouring all the children who attended Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, erected in 2013.

Church in Canada must work to ensure the grounds of the Residential Schools we ran—and especially Birtle and Cecilia Jeffrey, which we ran the longest—are searched for any unmarked graves. We must also ensure any search is taken in respectful consultation with the Indigenous communities and families impacted; this would include financial support from the church for those searches. **We commit to this work.**

We have heard that any work to address the legacy of Indian Residential Schools must also address the ongoing inequity faced by today's Indigenous children, and we are asked to seek justice through advocacy for the rights of all Indigenous children. **We commit to this work.**

We have heard The Presbyterian Church in Canada must confront and address colonialism and systemic racism against Indigenous people in both the church and Canadian society. This systemic racism and colonialism shape the daily lives of Indigenous people in the church and in society in daily acts many take for granted, such as accessing health care, access to clean drinking wa-

ter, equity in education, and equitable treatment in court systems. We have seen how this systemic racism has resulted in incidents like how Joyce Echaquan was treated before her death when she sought access to health care, in significantly higher rates of violent encounters with police, and in significantly higher rates of child apprehension into foster care systems, to name just a few examples. As disciples of Christ, the church is called to work for justice by advocating for an end to these and other similar injustices against Indigenous people. **We commit to this work.**

We have heard that it is important to support the recommendations recently issued by the Native Women's Association regarding ending the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls¹, as well as continuing to support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action² and the Calls for Justice that stem from the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.³ **We commit to this work.**

Because the Residential Schools

operated for almost nine decades, harming generations of communities, true healing and reconciliation will require a lengthy journey over several more generations and a great deal of work. The continued discoveries of unmarked graves leads to unspeakable grief and ongoing harm in communities across our country. Reconciliation is a long road that requires acknowledgement of harm, apology for taking part in that harm, concrete steps to redress the harm, and the rebuilding of broken relationships. We are called as disciples of Christ to reconciliation and to justice; this is work the church must do and commits to.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Native Women's Association of Canada's National Action Plan to Meet the Calls for Justice: nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NWAC-action-plan-FULL-ALL-EDITS.pdf
- 2 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- 3 Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report

RECONCILIATION

Travelling into the Past



By Vivian Ketchum, originating from Wauzbusk 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

It has been over two weeks since I came back from my B.C. trip with my friends. An emotional trip that took courage to walk into our past. A caravan of Indigenous mothers and grandmothers. Some of us were Residential School Survivors and leaders of the community. A journey doesn't begin with one step, it begins with taking action. Let me explain how our journey started.

News of the 215 graves began to ripple through social media. I got a message online from Geraldine Shingoose, or "Gramma" Shingoose as she is referred to in the Grassroots community. She was extremely upset at the news of little ones being found in unmarked graves in Kamloops. Gramma is a Residential School Survivor and has shared her story in schools. She attended a Catholic-run Residential School. I suggested we tie orange ribbons at St. Mary's Catholic Church downtown. A ribbon for each child; and that the ribbons be tied by Residential School Survivors. Gramma Shingoose liked the idea and we agreed to meet at the church later that day. Once there, Gramma Shingoose smudged the ribbons before we tied them onto the fence. Other Residential School Survivors came to help. Once the orange ribbons were on the fence and the doors of the church, Gramma Shingoose sang a song on her drum. Tears were running down her face as

she sang to the little ones. An empowering moment that had others wanting to do more for the 215 little ones found.

Alaya McIvor, a youth grassroots member, wanted to set up a Sacred Fire for four days at the Manitoba Legislative Building grounds for the 215 little ones found in Kamloops. The Sacred Fire stayed lit from May 29 to June 2. Alaya set up the Fire after asking the grandmothers of the community for permission. The Fire burned for four days at the Legislative Building grounds and people gathered to offer prayers. Residential School Survivors and the general public came by to offer their support and put shoes by the Legislative Building steps. Survivors came from as far away as Northern Manitoba and Ontario.

After the four days of mourning at the Sacred Fire, Gramma Shingoose decided to travel to Kamloops to give the Sacred Fire's ashes to

the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc community. The Sacred Fire held all the prayers of people that came down to the Legislative Building grounds during the four days. Gramma Shingoose put a call out for items to be put in the Sacred Bundle. A copper Vessel for the Sacred Fire's ashes. Treaty One Territory flag, Métis sash, items for children like infant moccasins and a Star Blanket. Four Sacred medicines—Sage, Tobacco, Sweet grass and Cedar. Medicine bags and other items were added to the Bundle.

Then Gramma Shingoose contacted me again asking if I wanted to travel to B.C. to take the items to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. She was organizing a caravan of mothers and grandmothers to go on the trip. Some of them were Residential School Survivors and their children and grandchildren. We left on June 28 to head west. Our trip was sponsored by various Indigenous organizations and individuals in Winnipeg. Our first stop was at Cowessess First Nation, where 751 unmarked graves were found. Beautiful scenery greeted us as we entered the territory. Then as the caravan pulled onto the grounds where the unmarked graves were, it was heartbreaking to see the little orange flags over the field. Little stuffed toys next to some of them. The grandmothers and mothers spoke of being overcome with emotion at seeing the flags. The group gathered at the far end of the field after walking through the orange flags. (We asked for permission from the community members before doing so.) The women sat down in the shade of the trees to sing and drum for the little ones. Then we walked back to where the tipi was for the welcoming ceremony to greet us. At the end of the day, we left with heavy hearts and thoughts of what we had witnessed.



The caravan of women decided to take a few days off once we had reached Kamloops. On the day of giving the Sacred Bundle over to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, it was smudged by Gramma Shingoose with the help of the women. Then we drove to the Kamloops Residential School memorial site. Again, seeing the stuffed toys and gifts placed by the memorial site was heart-wrenching. Especially with the school looming in the background. It looked so similar to the school I had attended as a child. There was a ceremony held to give the Sacred Bundle to the Chief, Rosanne Casimir of Tk'emlúps

te Secwépemc, and members of the council. The caravan of women were greeted warmly by the Chief and members of her band.

The caravan of grandmothers and mothers began the long trip home east, changed by our experiences and what we saw around us. We had to support each other on this journey that was filled with tears and sorrow. We each came home with stories, as Gramma Shingoose liked to describe it. Stories of how a group of Residential School Survivors went to console a community down west. Of the little ones they connected with through songs and tears.



A Journey to Kamloops

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

The congregation of St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont., decided to help bring light to the discovery of the unidentified graves at the former Kamloops Residential School in Kamloops, B.C., along with the painful history of Residential Schools overall, by taking on a challenge that invited participants to walk, bike, swim, run,

or use any non-motorized means to cover 215 kilometres.

The congregation set a goal to log 3,969 km, which is the distance between St. Andrew's-Chalmers church and the site of the former Kamloops Residential School cemetery. This goal was set with the express intent to remember the children and work towards reconciliation. It was not a challenge to see who could do the most, or be the fastest, or to raise funds. It was strictly to raise awareness.

There were 34 people involved—22 members from the church and 12 people from the community.

The accomplishment was great. We covered 4,974.74 kilometres, exceeding our goal by 265.73 km. We crossed Ontario, the Prairies then to Kamloops Residential School. Our journey continued and we went to Vancouver and Victoria finishing in Alberni, the site of The Presbyterian Church in Canada's westernmost Residential School.

RECONCILIATION

Responding to Red Paint on Church Doors

By Rev. Jake Van Pernis, Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

"Are those the front doors of Grace?"

I was asked this question as a phone was handed to me with a post from Twitter. The post showed a picture of the front of Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., with red paint splattered on the doors and building.

A few phone calls later, and I learned the red paint was splattered on Grace's doors early on the morning of July 1. The Twitter photo of Grace Church was from that day's news story: 10 churches in Calgary had red or orange paint splattered on their church doors and buildings as acts of protest. It was hard to see the picture and then see the paint in person because the act was an expression of the grief, anger, lament and hurt felt in response to the discoveries of over 1,000 unmarked graves at the sites of former Residential Schools in Canada.

The thought of cleaning up the red paint on Grace's building that day was very present, yet something didn't feel right in rushing to clean it up. Instead, it felt like there was a need to sit with the red paint for a while and hold space for the grief,

anger and hurt this paint represented.

On July 2, the ministers of Grace, Grace's Interim Moderator and two members of Grace's staff met to share insights regarding how Grace would respond to the red paint with the congregation and community. The plan we discussed was to allow it to remain on the doors of the church until Session met on July 8 to provide direction. We also decided sandwich boards would be placed by Grace's front steps sharing a QR code and information linking people to Grace's response and to the work of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This work has included ways to foster justice, healing and reconciliation for its role in operating Residential Schools and recognizing how our involvement has inflicted deep and lasting trauma that is still being felt today.

In the middle of this conversation about Grace's immediate response, one of the local news channels came by to get some video footage of the red paint on Grace's doors. The Rev. Maren McLean Persaud and I greeted the person working the camera, and soon after our greeting, questions were being asked about our response. We shared that we would be leaving the red paint, for now, to allow people to reflect on it and be



The doors of Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., on July 1.

in conversation about this part of our collective history.

That Friday afternoon, after the interview, we shared the response plan with Grace's elders, members of the congregation and the community. The visits to Grace's website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts steadily increased. By the end of the weekend, Grace's website traffic had increased by 1,000%, and our post on Facebook was trending with over 40,000 views. The majority of responses to leave the paint on the doors have been incredibly positive and affirmed that leaving the paint up is an invitation for reflection and conversation.

The growing story of Grace's response has also meant next steps need to be discerned, shared and lived into. The Session of Grace met

on July 8 and agreed that the red paint would remain on the doors for the foreseeable future, and also established a working group from Grace to dig into the work of truth, healing and reconciliation. The group has launched community conversations on the front steps of Grace and will be extending invitations to the congregation and community. Plans are being put together to share history, stories and understandings, and a public Service of Lament is being planned for the end of September.

Together, we'll be in conversation about the traditions and beliefs of First Nations people in and around Calgary, Treaty Seven, as well as the work of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. And finally, we hope to look for ways to collaborate in works of truth, healing and reconciliation.



The Rev. Jake Van Pernis.

There is red paint on Grace's doors—a necessary reminder that there is good, communal and collaborative work ahead.

A Display of Orange Ribbons in St. Marys



Orange ribbons were tied around St. Marys Presbyterian Church as a tangible way to remember the lives lost at Residential Schools.

By the Rev. Gwen Ament, St. Marys Presbyterian Church in St. Marys, Ont.

One Saturday evening in June, we learned that ground-penetrating radar had discovered the remains of 215 children near the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, which operated from 1890 until the late 1970s. While we did know that there are between 4,000 to 6,000 unresolved missing persons from the days of Residential Schools, this discovery reflected a horrific reality that has long been ignored.

Struggling with grief, shame and despair, a tangible way to honour these lost children seemed to be the tying of an orange ribbon for each child. Two hundred and fifteen ribbons were tied the next morning. Since then, we have added another

1,300 to reflect further discoveries. It is a very visible and tangible presentation at this point, which people have responded to in a variety of ways. Some have contacted me in thanksgiving for this humble act and have gone on to share their personal story of Residential School. Many drive or walk by, slowing down as they pass and commenting that the display is important, for we need to be talking about this and working towards right relationship with our Indigenous neighbours.

The display seems to have become a venue to open conversation—with teachers and their classes, within families and within our wider community. When the ribbons do come down, they will be woven into black mesh, which will be hung in our building with accompanying words



The painting of small orange stones was completed on Canada Day as the congregation reflected in a different way on what it means to be Canadian.

about Residential Schools and our church's involvement, as well as the ongoing efforts to move forward in developing positive, healthy relations with Indigenous people.

RECONCILIATION

National Indigenous Peoples Day in Saskatoon



Dylon Nippi, Executive Director of Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry, with the socks donated by St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon, Sask.

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

"As we gather, we are mindful of the fact that we meet on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Treaty Six First Nations. We are grateful for the hospitality we have received as settlers in this place and recommit ourselves to the work of reconciliation and building good relations with the First Peoples of this land." The Rev. Roberto DeSandoli introduced this land acknowledgement statement at the beginning of our worship service on National Indigenous Peoples Day.

On June 20, 2021, the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon, Sask., Outreach Commit-

tee and Pastoral Care Committee planned the service that focused on National Indigenous Peoples Day. This has been an annual service for many years in our church when we recognize and celebrate Indigenous peoples through prayer, music and speakers.

This year has once again been another exceptional experience.

Dylon Nippi, Executive Director of Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry (SCNM), began his virtual sermon with a scripture reading from John 21:15-19 by the Rev. Dr. Stewart Folster, former Executive Director of SCNM. Dylon's own arrangement of drumming in the background was effective and poignant as the beat and rhythm brought the scripture to life.

As he introduced his two-year-old daughter, Dylon remarked that the date was a "special Sunday for me, being Father's Day." By explaining his hopes for his daughter's future, I found his life story helped me to better understand his sadness from not knowing his Native language, heritage or identity. He spoke about being "lost" through dark, unspeakable times in his life and then shared how God had found him. His profound sermon and original music can be heard on our church's website at standrews-saskatoon.com.

During this service, the Rev. DeSandoli announced the results of our Sock Drive for Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry. The Outreach Committee members are aware of many

persistent needs of folk who visit the Mission. They decided on a particular campaign to raise money for socks. In the past, our church members' offerings have been socks during our Maundy Thursday service for SCNM, but we have been unable to do so due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Instead, money was raised through generous donations—enough to buy 660 pairs of socks at a cost of \$10 per pair.

We have other programs to support SCNM: the sandwich program, art program, and blanket and clothing campaigns. I find it uplifting to read about other churches' happenings and good ideas, so I share these thoughts from St. Andrew's, Saskatoon, as we strive to bring the Lord's grace and mercy to all.

LEADERSHIP

Colouring, Campfires and Curiosity about Jesus

Cornerstone Ministries Makes Meaningful Connections During COVID-19

By Emily Hill, Education Program Coordinator, Canadian Ministries

Before the pandemic happened, the Rev. Nicole Reid would have never believed that a colouring contest would become an important part of her ministry, but that is exactly what took place at the beginning of the pandemic. Cornerstone Ministries, which started in a pregnancy centre but has since moved to Knox Presbyterian Church in Dunnville, Ont., primarily serves a community of marginalized women and their families. Before COVID-19, they were meeting in person for bi-weekly, kid-friendly, come-as-you-are worship gatherings, where questions were welcome, fun was encouraged and the gospel was shared in an accessible way. While moving online worked

for a few people, it did not provide the connection and support that the women and children had come to appreciate. While Nicole was wondering what to do next, God already had a plan.

"It was never an issue for God," the Rev. Nicole Reid explained as she talked about the shifts that Cornerstone Ministry has had to make because of COVID-19. "God provided me new and creative ways of connecting." One of those ways was through a colouring contest. Each Saturday, Nicole would deliver different Bible-themed colouring sheets to the families. Then, the kids would colour the pictures, take a photo of them and send them to Nicole. Nicole would then put the names of those who submitted into a hat and draw one person's name to receive

a prize. This simple and creative way of engaging the children of Cornerstone had many fringe benefits. "It gave me an excuse to show up on the women's doorsteps, which led to meaningful porch conversations," Nicole said. "I also became known as the 'colouring contest lady' that families looked forward to seeing." Some of the moms even started submitting coloured pictures for the contest—a sign that the contest was fulfilling a need for creativity and connection for more than just the children!

The colouring contest characterizes the values that are at the heart of Cornerstone: supportive relationships, curious and creative engagement with faith, and practicing Jesus-style love. Other initiatives that Nicole started during the pandemic include

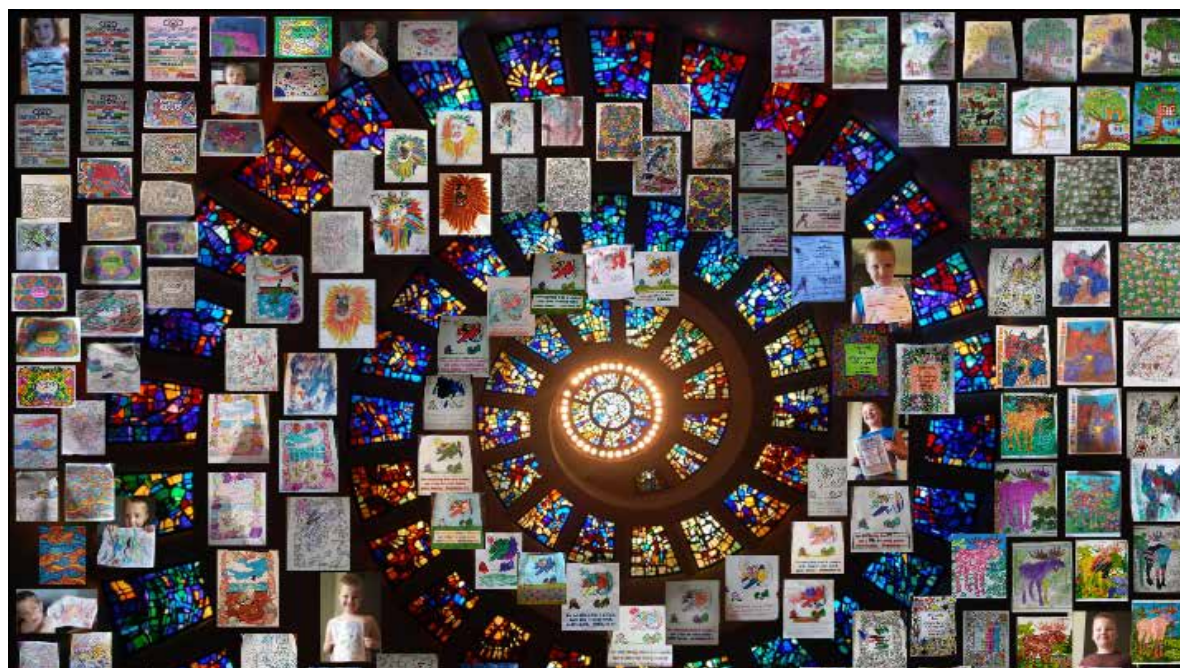
a teaching series made up entirely of Facebook posts, a weekly video series for kids, outdoor campfire gatherings and a private Facebook group for the women to discuss faith questions. These initiatives were also successful at keeping the community connected during a difficult time.

"The women, many of whom are single moms, needed support and adult conversation," Nicole said. "We were able to provide that along with opportunities to get to know Jesus better."

One of Nicole's main goals in starting Cornerstone was to create a community where people who might feel uncomfortable in a traditional church setting could get to know Jesus. As Nicole described, "We are not a church plant in the traditional sense, but worshipping God is an important part of what we

do together."

When The Presbyterian Church in Canada started Cyclical PCC—a church-planting support initiative—Nicole joined the first cohort of starters. As part of Cyclical, Nicole receives individual coaching and gathers for monthly online calls with other Presbyterians who are forming new worshipping communities. She is grateful that The Presbyterian Church in Canada is gathering innovators from the denomination together, especially as ministry landscapes continue to shift with the pandemic. The adaptability, creativity and passion for sharing the gospel that exists amongst Cyclical PCC participants is a gift at any time, but especially during times such as this when people need the peace and joy of Jesus more than ever.



Submissions to the Bible-themed colouring contest by Cornerstone Ministries at Knox Presbyterian Church in Dunnville, Ont.

LEADERSHIP

Gathering at the Virtual Table

By Emily Hill, Education Program Coordinator, Canadian Ministries

“Be with us as we gather, Lord, make us one though we are scattered. Fill our hunger for communion, meet us in this loneliness.”

The opening prayer in *Edible Theology*’s dinner church liturgy reflects the hunger most people have felt for communion over the past year and a half. The prayer also reminds us that God has been with us, and has been making us one, even though we have been physically distant.

This important reminder is at the heart of the resources that Kendall Vanderslice, the creator of *Edible Theology*, has made during the pandemic. Vanderslice—a professionally-trained baker and theologian with a master’s degree from Duke Divinity School—has spent her career exploring the intersection of food and spiritual formation. The table as a physical space of gathering has always been central to her work. The pandemic required that she reimagine what it means for Christians to come to the table together.

“I believe that Jesus was serious when he told us to eat in remembrance of me,” Vanderslice explained. “Whether or not the church is celebrating the sacramental meal at this time, the table is still a powerful means of experiencing God’s presence as we feast.” With this in mind, Vanderslice started making liturgies for people gathering to eat together online.

In June, Presbyterians from across Canada found out what a powerful experience it is to gather around a virtual table when Vanderslice came to teach those in Cyclical PCC (a church-planting support initiative)



Cyclical PCC and Evangelism Network members from across Canada joined together online in June.

and The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s Evangelism Network about dinner church. We were given simple instructions: show up on the Zoom call with our dinner and some bread. The dinner liturgy followed a traditional pattern of welcome, opening prayer, scripture readings, sermon, breaking bread, closing prayer and benediction. At the time when we would normally have communion, we were invited to break bread together and eat our dinners.

Vanderslice suggested that when we host virtual dinner church with our own communities, we should use the time when we are breaking bread together to share updates and pray for one another. She explained, “Since you cannot physically pass bread to one another, you can use

this time for the pastor or service leader to pray a simple blessing over each individual, for each person to offer an update about how they are doing, or, if your group is too large to address each individual, for the leader to pray a blessing over the group as a whole.” While it may seem time consuming to pray a blessing over everyone by name, Vanderslice emphasized its importance: “It is quite a meaningful time for everyone gath-

ered—a reminder that each person is seen, known and valued beyond being a floating face on a screen.”

The virtual dinner church gathering was, indeed, a meaningful time for those of us who gathered. One participant put it well when he said, “As church leaders, we are so often the ones planning services and events for others. It was a blessing to come and be fed spiritually.” We left the virtual dinner church gath-

ering feeling full in more ways than one and with new tools for exploring food and faith formation with our own communities.

If you would like to discuss how to host a dinner church event, please contact Canadian Ministries at canadianministries@presbyterian.ca. For more information about Kendall Vanderslice’s resources, please visit the *Edible Theology* website at edibletheology.com.

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LEADERSHIP

Pregnancy and Infant Loss and the Church

Moving from Silence to Lament

By the Rev. Maren McLean Persaud, Associate Minister, Children and Youth, Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

One in six families in Canada experiences infertility, and approximately one in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage. Knowing these statistics, it's safe to reason that pregnancy and infant loss have touched the lives of many in our congregations and faith communities. These losses are more common than we think. The losses are more hidden than they should be, and the pain experienced is never short-lived.

I live with infertility in my own life and have experienced reproductive loss many times. It wasn't until I was vulnerable in sharing those experiences with others in my faith community that I realized I wasn't alone.

Many others were carrying similar pain, even if they had experienced the loss many years ago. While our society has come a long way in talking openly about pregnancy loss and infertility, there is still lots of room for improvement. As people called to weep with those who weep, churches need to play a role in creating spaces where the grief, lament and trauma from these not-so-rare experiences are honoured, expressed and held tenderly by the wider community.

The church seems to save our tears for funerals, but we don't always create intentional space to mourn other kinds of loss outside those services.

Churches also regularly celebrate days that can be incredibly isolating to any family or individual who has experienced reproductive loss. Mother's Day and Father's Day,



The Rev. Maren Persaud.

Christmas, Baptisms and even All Saints Day can be triggering and isolating events. While we don't need to constantly remind one another of reproductive loss statistics on these days and cram in as many mentions of infertility and pregnancy loss as we can manage, simply being aware of the realities in some people's lives

can go a long way in creating a culture of awareness and tenderness.

However, we can be very intentional about including the sorrow that comes from pregnancy and infant loss in our worshipping life together. We have rich and meaningful biblical texts to help us reflect theologically on these losses. We have music and songs that help express the pain and grief that come out of these experiences. Ultimately, we have good news of hope that can help move us (sometimes very slowly) through our most difficult experiences.

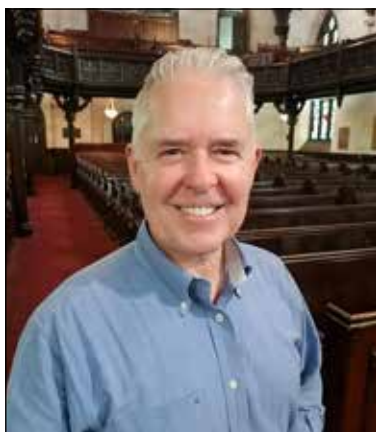
People's reproductive losses need a place in the life of the faith community to which they belong. We know how to do the right things when someone's loved one dies—we prepare food, send cards, reach out and arrange meaningful funeral services. Can we learn how to sit with the complicated grief that comes with pregnancy loss or infertility?

How faith communities choose to

recognize these losses will vary, but at Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., where I serve, we will be marking Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day on October 15 with a candlelit Service of Lament and Remembering. We will acknowledge the pain and grief we are walking with; we will remember the children we had hoped to hold, and we will mourn these difficult and complex losses. We are hopeful that these rituals will be meaningful to families carrying silent burdens. This service can begin to create a culture of awareness and tenderness in our community.

If you are looking for resources to use in your community or to use in your own leadership and care of others, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship has gathered a meaningful and comprehensive list of helpful tools and resources at worship. calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/worship-resources-for-pregnancy-loss-and-infertility.

Responding to the Opioid Crisis



By the Rev. Dr. J. Mark Lewis, Interim Moderator at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont.

In November 2021, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., will become the city's only safe injection site for people struggling with opioid addiction.

The Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) site will be managed by Hamilton Urban Core (HUC) who will lease an area of about 1,000 square feet formerly used by St. Paul's as a nursery, library and meeting area. HUC is a publicly funded inner-city and community health centre.

St. Paul's is responding to the opioid crisis in Canada. According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction and Public Health Ontario, 3,873 people died of

opioid overdoses in Canada in 2019; of those, 1,535 died in Ontario. In 2020, 125 people died of opioid overdoses in Hamilton.

At St. Paul's, we want to be engaged in a partnership that will reduce the hurt caused by opioid addiction. The CTS site at St. Paul's will manage over 27,000 visits per year and provide career counselling and addiction counselling in addition to a safe injection site.

Providing a CTS site serves a vulnerable sector of the community, takes strain away from hospital emergency rooms, reduces the spread of infectious disease, including, but not limited to, HIV and Hepatitis C, reduces the number of used hypodermic needles disposed of in public, provides access to health and social services and promotes the use of detox and drug treatment services. All of these benefits are consistent with St. Paul's desire to respect the dignity of all people.

In our conversations with HUC, the people of St. Paul's came to have a new understanding of the nature of drug addiction. We have some tendency to think in negative terms of persons who struggle with drug addiction. We do not take into account that drug addiction is often a coping mechanism that develops in response to trauma brought about by abuse, lack of housing, chronic un-

employment or poverty.

For St. Paul's, this relationship and partnership with HUC represents a move towards a new understanding of what the church must be if it is to have a vibrant and meaningful future. We used to ask, "How can we get more people?" and "How can we get more money?" Now we ask, "What needs exist in our community that are not being met?" and "Who is vulnerable, and needs our help?" and "How can we use our building and location to serve the Kingdom of God?"

It may be that somewhere along the way, many traditional congregations forgot to ask the question, "Why do we exist?" A significant part of the answer to "why," is that we exist to uphold the equality of all people, to defend the dignity of all people and to appreciate the eternal worth of all people. Those are the things that Jesus did, and that Jesus commissioned us to do. We do these things when we reach out with love to the most vulnerable people around us.

The members of St. Paul's are compassionate and mission-minded. Apart from participating with enthusiasm in the missions of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, they have always looked to their community to see who needs help. St. Paul's has long been home to the Cottage Art Studio, an outreach initiative by the Hamilton Program for Persons with



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont.

Schizophrenia and has provided a regular meal program for homeless people.

Our new partnership with HUC allows us to use our building and location to serve God by serving people in need. The initial lease with HUC is for two years, but we hope that at the

end of that time, HUC will continue to use our facility as a satellite site. We have been busy setting up the new relationship with HUC, but we are already looking for new partnerships that are consistent with the mission of helping the most vulnerable people in our community.

PRESBYTERIANS SHARING

Presbyterians Sharing and Funds of the Church



Using funds from a PCC Innovation Grant administered by Canadian Ministries, staff at Camp Douglas in Roberts Creek, B.C., adapted their summer 2020 programming using an online platform to run camp activities that could be done from home, including Bible studies, campfires, arts and crafts, science experiments and cooking classes.

By Karen Plater, Associate Secretary,
Planned Giving & Stewardship

In response to the devastating discovery of unmarked graves at former Residential Schools, The Presbyterian Church in Canada launched the Honouring the Children: Reconciliation and Residential Schools Fund. The fund will provide resources to help search for graves, respond to trauma and support healing initiatives—all with the guidance of Indigenous people and affected communities.

The PCC manages many funds that support specific areas of ministry and mission, over and above the annual operating budget of the church, which is funded by gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. Many of these funds began as bequests, special gifts or campaigns to support things like capital projects, congregational development, experimental ministry and leadership opportunities, both in Canada and around the world. The Creative Ministry with Children and Youth Fund helps congregations expand their ministry with young people. The International Ministries Legacy Fund supports emergent projects of international partners. The Growing Churches Fund helps presbyteries start new congregations and offer strategic support for church growth. This past year, Innovation Grants helped congregations and ministries acquire new technology as they moved worship services and fellowship activities online in response to COVID-19.

Presbyterian World Service & Development—the PCC’s agency for relief and development—began in 1947 as a special fund to support rebuilding in the wake of World War II. Now it functions as an agency with dozens of sub-funds that help communities around the world fight chronic poverty and respond to emergencies.

Presbyterians Sharing and special funds both contribute to the ongoing work of the PCC, complementing and building upon one another. While the Honouring the Children fund will support initiatives related to the discovery of unmarked graves, Presbyterians Sharing supports ongoing programs that address systemic racism against Indigenous people and provides core funding for ministries with Indigenous people. Included in this issue of the Presbyterian Connection is the Gifts of Change catalogue, which contains ideas for gifts that will transform people’s lives. All of these gifts will build on and enhance ongoing mission and ministry supported by undesignated gifts to Presbyterians Sharing and PWS&D.

All funds need to be administered—investments overseen, proposals received, funds disbursed and reports written. Most of this work is done by financial and program staff whose salaries are paid by Presbyterians Sharing. While PWS&D funding supports staff dedicated to relief and development work, gifts to Presbyterians Sharing help keep PWS&D’s

costs low by providing some financial administration, logistical support and rent-free space. Presbyterians Sharing provides a strong foundation supporting a broad range of ministries of our church.

Sometimes people are afraid special funds will take away from undesignated gifts, however research has shown, when properly balanced, that they provide more opportunities for people to give to mission and ministry. The Rev. Dr. Kennon Callahan called this “opening giving doors.” People who might not give to undesignated funds may give to something specific that has touched their lives or hearts, and people who do give generously to undesignated funds may also want to give a bit more to support something that has particularly touched their lives. The result is more opportunities to fulfill God’s mission.

This same principle applies in congregational ministry. Congregations with special funds for ministry—sending children and youth to camp, supporting benevolence opportunities, running a food bank—that build on and complement the ministry supported by the congregation’s weekly tithes and offerings, are generally doing more ministry overall. And, of course, the impact of financial gifts is multiplied by the time and skills given by committee members and volunteers at both local and national levels.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Decisions Made at General Assembly

Decisions Regarding Sexuality: Where Do We Go From Here?

By Carragh Erhardt, Program Coordinator, Sexuality and Inclusion

At General Assembly (June 6–9, 2021), The Presbyterian Church in Canada made several decisions related to ministry with LGBTQI people, including marriage and ordination. After years of prayerful debate and study, and much passionate and heartfelt discussion, The Presbyterian Church in Canada agreed to make changes to its theology and practice regarding marriage, which may now be defined either as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or as a covenant relationship between two adult people. The church agreed that LGBTQI people (whether married or single) can be ordained and are welcome to serve as ministers and ruling elders. The General Assembly also approved 23 recommendations from the Rainbow Communion to acknowledge harm the church has caused LGBTQI people and establish policies and programs that will help the church include LGBTQI people more fully in all aspects of ministry.

What Has Changed?

Because the decisions regarding marriage and ordination change church doctrine and practice, they were considered and adopted through a multi-year process known as the Barrier Act. The decision about marriage is as follows: “The Presbyterian Church in Canada holds two parallel definitions of marriage and recognizes that faithful, Holy Spirit filled, Christ centred, God honouring people can understand marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or as a covenant relationship between two adult per-

sons” (Remit B, 2019). This motion ensures that “congregations, Sessions, ruling and teaching elders are granted liberty of conscience and action on marriage,” meaning that ministers may choose to officiate or not officiate the marriages of same-sex couples. Sessions, as before, are responsible for making decisions about how their sanctuary is used.

This change to the church’s definition of marriage is accompanied by the additional decision that “congregations and presbyteries may call and ordain as ministers and elect and ordain as ruling elders LGBTQI persons (married or single) with the provision that liberty of conscience and action regarding participation in ordinations, inductions and installations be granted to ministers and ruling elders” (Remit C, 2019). The Clerks of Assembly have prepared provisional guidelines to facilitate the calls and election of LGBTQI candidates that outline relevant information about human rights legislation, liberty of conscience and pastoral considerations.

How is the Church Addressing Harm to LGBTQI People?

As part of the church’s discernment regarding doctrine related to marriage and ordination, the church is working to acknowledge and address the painful impacts of discrimination against LGBTQI people. The 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, which was initially recognized in the 1994 report to General Assembly about Human Sexuality. By adopting all recommendations from the Rainbow Communion, the Assembly affirmed that all people, whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity, are equally beloved by God. Congregations are encouraged to provide opportunities for all to offer their gifts in worship and in the life and ministry of the

church. The Assembly also agreed that identifying as LGBTQI and/or being in a same-sex marriage is not grounds for discipline 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 to equip congregations working to become more inclusive and a fund will be established to support psychotherapy or counselling for those who have experienced harm done by homophobia, hypocrisy, transphobia and heterosexism in the denomination.

What Happens Now?

Congregations have had a diversity of experiences participating in conversations about sexuality, marriage and ordination. The decisions made at the 2021 General Assembly will bring about a variety of reactions from members of the church. Each congregation will need to consider their unique context as they discern how these decisions will impact their policies and practices. The following are some things to consider in the months ahead.

Communicate the Decisions of General Assembly to Your Congregation

Ministers and elders should ensure that their congregation is aware of the decisions that were made at General Assembly regarding the remits and the Rainbow Communion’s rec-

ommendations. Depending on how closely the congregation has followed the denomination’s discernment process, it might be helpful to include some background information from the PCC’s Social Action Hub. Visit presbyterian.ca/social-action.

Gather Feedback from Your Congregation

In times of change, it’s important for leaders to create opportunities to hear from members of their congregations. Consider coordinating a group of leaders in the congregation who are available for pastoral visits with members of the congregation who want to express their views or ask questions. Sessions may also wish to gather additional feedback about next steps through a congregational meeting or survey. This can help elders and ministers assess whether there is interest in particular areas for study, community partnerships, or other activities to help the congregation live out the decisions made at General Assembly.

Education or Study

After hearing from members of the congregation, it might be clear that there is an interest in studying topics related to LGBTQI inclusion in the church to understand how The Presbyterian Church in Canada arrived at the decisions made at General Assembly and to consider ways of becoming more welcoming and inclusive as a congregation. Some of the resources at the end of this article, including the Rainbow Communion’s Final Report, are a good place to start.

Policy Review

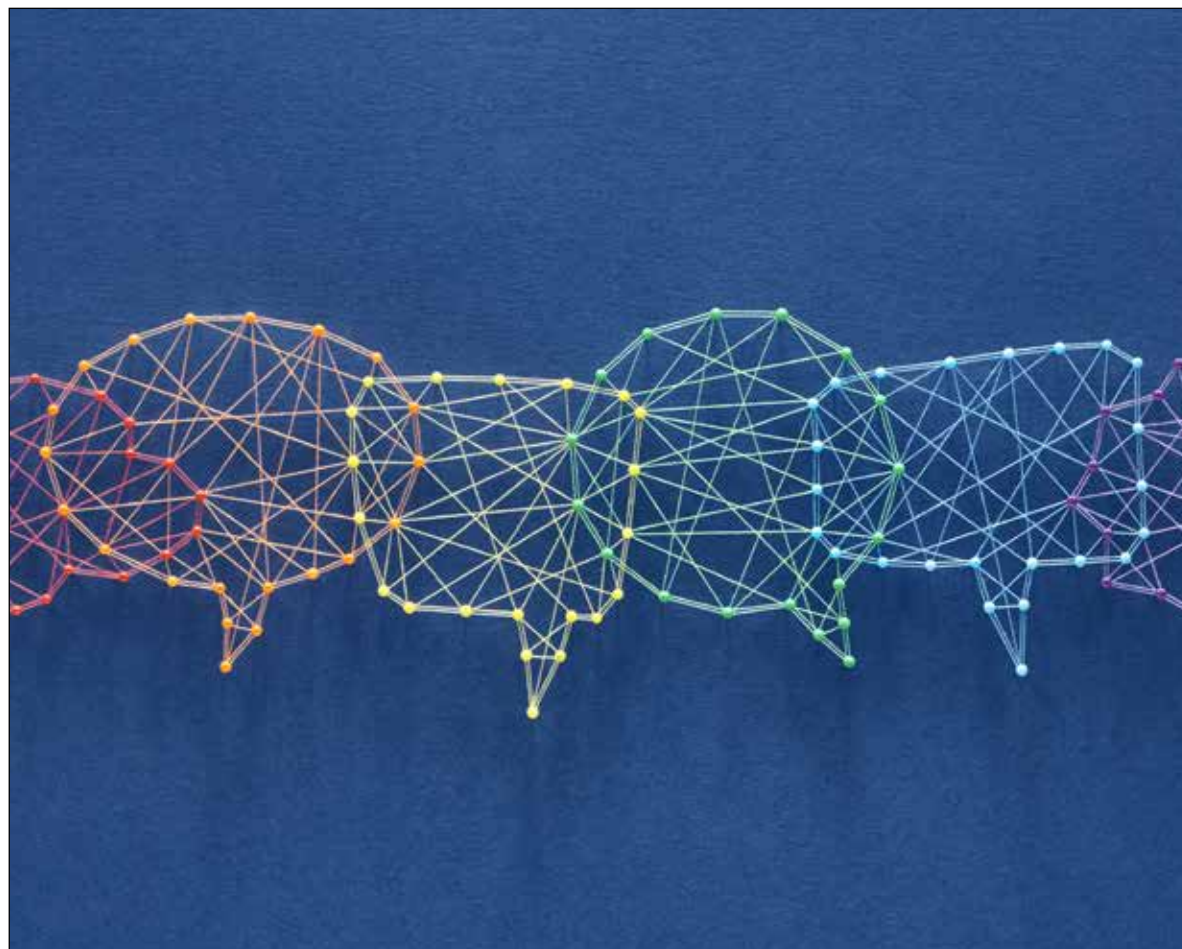
The decision about which weddings may take place in a congregation’s sanctuary is the responsibility of Session. While discerning how General Assembly’s decision about marriage may be applied to their congregations, Sessions are also encouraged to review other relevant policies, procedures and practices to ensure they reflect the full inclusion of all people (Rainbow Communion Recommendation No. 11). Such policies may relate to church rentals, baptism, communion, or other areas of ministry. Having clear policies that are known within the congregation and that are clearly communicated to the public can benefit LGBTQI people but also others who may be affected by church policies. The Life and Mission Agency is preparing resources to support congregations in this work.

As we navigate these changes in our ministries, we pray that the grace of God, the love of Jesus Christ and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit will guide the church towards reconciliation with LGBTQI people.

Resources

Visit presbyterian.ca/sexuality for resources, reports and statements, including:

- Provisional guidelines to facilitate calls and elections of LGBTQI candidates
- Clerks’ statement on liberty of conscience and action
- The Rainbow Communion’s Final Report
- Resources related to LGBTQI pastoral care
- Discussion and study resources.



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Overview of Decisions

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

The Session of each congregation receives a letter from the Clerks of Assembly each year after General Assembly that outlines the decisions that affect congregations and Session. Sessions then discern how best to enact the Assembly's decisions in their congregation and neighbourhoods. Below are only some of the decisions that may be of interest to people in the church.

Healing and Reconciliation and Unmarked Graves

In response to the devastating confirmation of unmarked graves on the grounds of former Residential Schools, the current moderator, the Rev. Dr. Dan Scott, and the former moderator of the General Assembly, the Rev. Amanda Currie, wrote a statement on behalf of the church. See page 5 for the full statement.

healing initiatives. All work will complement efforts to address systemic racism against Indigenous people, both in the church and in society, and the ongoing healing and reconciliation work being done in the ministries of the National Indigenous Ministry Council.

To begin, the PCC has committed \$1 million from national funds, and invites congregations and individuals to make additional contributions to this important work. Donations can be made at presbyterian.ca/honouring-children-fund.

Gun Violence

The Assembly received a report and adopted recommendations drawing attention to the intersection of misogyny, poverty, racism and gun violence and to the wider community-trauma inflicted on all members when there is gun violence.

The moderator will write the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice, asking that they examine the contributing factors to gun violence. The church will also

tribution rate will be reduced to 11% of pensionable income, and the member pension contribution rate will be reduced to 8% of pensionable income.

Microfilming/Digitizing Congregational Records

Congregations were urged to have their Session minutes and church registers (marriages, baptisms, deaths/burials) microfilmed and/or digitized through the Archives office to ensure a preservation copy is created for these vital records.

Additional information about preserving congregational records can be found at presbyterianarchives.ca/archives-and-records-management or by phoning the PCC Archives at 1-800-619-7301.

Workplace Harassment

The General Assembly approved a workplace harassment policy for use throughout the church. The policy states that it is the policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that harassment of any kind shall not be tolerated and will be addressed. The policy defines harassment and outlines how the complaint, investigation, resolution and storage of documents, etc., are to be addressed. This policy applies to members, adherents, staff and volunteers in the PCC. It will be added to the Leading with Care policy when next published and can be read at presbyterian.ca/leading-with-care.

Training and support will be advertised in the autumn for Sessions and presbyteries as they begin to use the policy.

Requests for a Pathway for Congregations Potentially Requesting to Leave the PCC

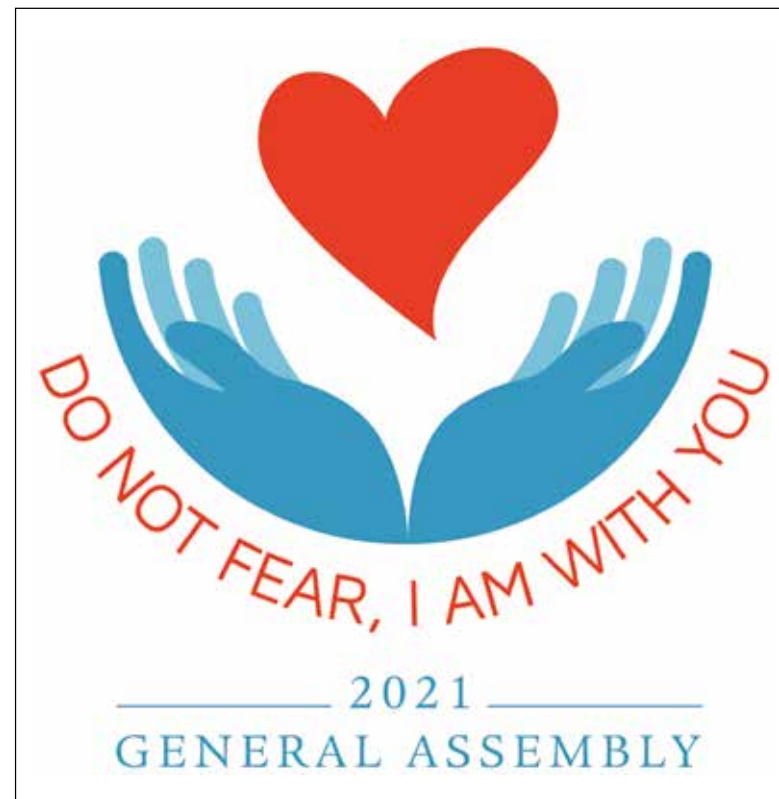
Now that the church has decided on Remits B and C about same-sex marriage, the Assembly Council will provide responses to overtures asking about the terms by which congregations might leave the denomination and asking for alternatives in the PCC's governance to accommodate those concerned about the outcome of the decisions about same-sex marriage. The Assembly Council is very aware of the theological divergence, conflict and anxiety within the church related to decisions about sexuality and is preparing to prayerfully address the overtures that have been referred to them. Some preliminary meetings about these matters have

ask that the government prioritize funding for social programs aimed at ending racism, misogyny, social and economic injustice and poverty to improve community safety, health and wellness.

All the moderators' letters can be read at presbyterian.ca/letters and may be used by congregations and individuals to write to the elected officials in their federal and provincial ridings.

Reduction in Pension and Benefits Rates

As of January 2022, the pension plan congregational assessment rate will be reduced to 4.5% of the congregation's dollar base. The employer con-



taken place and it is expected that responses to these questions will be considered at the next Assembly.

Statement on the Christian Use of Cannabis

The Committee on Church Doctrine provided a response to questions about the legalization of marijuana in Canada. The statement adopted by the General Assembly is similar to the reasoning provided for the use of alcohol, and reads as follows:

"There are different reasons for using cannabis. If cannabis has been prescribed by a physician, a non-inhaled form should be sought since smoking is a proven health risk. When taken as a therapeutically dispensed drug, cannabis is the same as any other prescribed medicine and should be taken as prescribed, with the necessary precautions to minimize risks associated with its consumption. The Bible does not speak about cannabis directly. Nonetheless, other scriptural and theological references can be used to guide Christian discernment."

In 1976, the Committee on Church Doctrine reaffirmed a statement on alcohol that rested on the formula of Liberty, Licence and Love:

Liberty: the Christian is free to receive alcoholic beverages as a good gift of God to be used temperately and with thanksgiving.

Licence: the Christian is not free to be immoderate or drunken in the use of alcoholic beverages.

Love: Christians must recognize

that they are required to love themselves and their neighbours as themselves and therefore their freedom to use alcohol is restricted by the necessity of exercising responsibility to enhance as much as possible their own lives and the lives of their neighbours.

Gender Pay Equity in the Church

The church has spoken decisively and has rejected discrimination on such grounds as gender. Repeatedly, the church has stated that women are to be treated no differently than men regarding ministry. Yet an overture submitted and accepted by the General Assembly stated that many women ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacraments within the PCC have experienced treatment that has fallen short of full equality and the church's principles and beliefs, and have encountered discrimination, unfair hiring practices, sexist comments and sexualized remarks within the denomination.

The Assembly decided that presbyteries will collect and analyze data on gender pay equity, including, but not limited to, gender, stipend, educational background, years of service and terms of call, and seek to identify and address any situations where gender discrimination exists. Additionally, presbyteries are to report annually the data on equity to the Assembly Council to assist in the feasibility and achievability needed to conduct stipendiary comparisons.

Read the moderators' statement on Residential Schools at presbyterian.ca/joint-statement

Watch a video on the history of Residential Schools at presbyterian.ca/residential-schools-video

Read the text of the 1994 Confession of The Presbyterian Church in Canada at presbyterian.ca/healing

Learn about the Doctrine of Discovery and our repudiation of it at presbyterian.ca/dod

Since the Assembly rose, the PCC has established the Honouring the Children: Reconciliation and Residential Schools Fund. This fund will support initiatives associated with searches for unmarked burial sites in communities where schools were operated by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This work begins with listening. We continue to live out the covenants made in the 1994 Confession, be led by the principles articulated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and seek the guidance of Indigenous people and affected communities. Responses may include searching for graves, responding to trauma and supporting

Bulletin covers, certificates, logos, photos, videos, slides for worship...

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COMMITTEES



Members of the National Indigenous Ministry Council in 2019.

The Nine Ministries of the National Indigenous Ministry Council:

Anamiewigummig Fellowship Centre – Kenora, Ont.

Winnipeg Inner City Missions – Winnipeg, Man.

Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry – Saskatoon, Sask.

Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church –
Mistawasis First Nation, Sask.

Place of Hope Indigenous Presbyterian Church –
Winnipeg, Man.

Edmonton Urban Native Ministry – Edmonton, Alta.

Nazko & Area Dakelh Outreach – Cariboo Region, B.C.

Hummingbird Ministries – Vancouver, B.C.

Cedar Tree Ministries (CTM) – Duncan, B.C.

The National Indigenous Ministry Council

Nine ministries comprise the National Indigenous Ministry Council (NIMC). Each ministry operates under a minister, director or representative who meets with the Council for mutual care, encouragement and discussion. Though the relationship between The Presbyterian Church in Canada and Indigenous peoples is wrought with history and pain, in part as a result of Residential Schools, the church is committed to the ongoing process of healing and reconciliation. The National Indigenous Ministry Council operates to uphold ministries engaging in this important work of sharing the reconciliatory action of Jesus in word and deed.

The work of the members of the National Indigenous Ministry Council spans a variety of contexts and ways of ministering. All the ministries serve Indigenous people who are Survivors or intergenerational Survivors of forms of colonialism, such as Residential Schools (of which the PCC operated 11), the Sixties Scoop, loss of ancestral lands,

disproportionate rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA (Two-Spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual) people as reported by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, as well as higher rates of removing Indigenous children from their homes even today and placing them into foster care systems. Though each ministry goes about its work in different ways, this context of colonialism means that often the ministries are working with people living with trauma and in need of healing. The ministries work to facilitate that healing through programs to meet needs in their specific contexts, including help with housing or food essentials, cultural programs for Indigenous youth, facilitating Sharing Circles or Sacred Fires with Elders, and helping people within communities bridge generations to foster connections that support community members at all stages of life.

In 2021, the NIMC became a standing committee of the General Assembly.

To learn more about the National Indigenous Ministry Council, watch the worship service the Council produced for National Indigenous Peoples Day this year (June 21) found here at presbyterian.ca/worship-service-indigenous-leaders or visit the Council's web page at presbyterian.ca/indigenous-ministries.



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ministries of the
National Indigenous
Ministry Council.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Telling Bible Stories with LEGO®



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

From the crumbling walls of Jericho to the classic manger scene, the Christian Education Department at Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I., has been exploring and sharing stories from the Bible with LEGO.

In early 2020, we started recreating Bible story scenes with LEGO in our Sunday School classes. With help from a stop-motion app, we've been able to bring our creations to life.

After choosing a Bible story, we plan a storyboard, build the scenes and assemble the characters. Next, we set up the lights and camera and then we begin to shoot our LEGO video using the app. To create the appearance of movement, we move each of the characters between each photo. The stop-motion app strings hundreds of photos together to create a stop-motion video. To complete the video, we add music, sound effects and voiceover audio recordings.

Recreating Bible stories with LEGO creates an opportunity for children to dwell in and explore the Bible together. These tiny theologians, while digging through boxes of LEGO, be-

gin to ask questions about the story, its setting and its characters. What did the Beautiful Gate look like? Was Hannah praying at the temple or the tabernacle? Why did Jesus tell this particular parable? Exploring these questions together with our children allows us to experience these much-loved stories in new ways.

Using these videos during our Children's Story component of Sunday worship has brought endless comments from congregation members of all ages. Who knew that these stop-motion animations would be a huge hit with adults, as well! Our Christian Education Coordinator, Melissa Deelstra, her husband and their four children have invested so much work into these productions. Through these efforts, they have managed to bring Bible stories to life for all to enjoy at Zion Church.

Over the past year, more than 20



stop-motion videos have been produced, including: *The Tower of Babel*, *Moses and the Burning Bush*, *The Fall of Jericho*, *Hannah's Prayer*, *The Birth of Jesus*, *The Shepherds* and *The Road to Emmaus*. You can find all these LEGO Bible story videos and more on our website at zionpres.org/bible-story-videos. Feel free to use the videos with your family, friends or children's ministry. Better yet, download a stop-motion app and join us in retelling Bible stories with children in new ways!



MISSION AND OUTREACH

Peer Worker Program at ehm

Hope, healing and recovery through compassionate employment

By Jennifer Sully-Ferraro,
Sr. Director of Programs & Client Care,
Evangel Hall Mission

At Evangel Hall Mission (ehm) in Toronto, Ont., clients come through our doors bearing the weight of difficult and often traumatic life stories. We may not get to know the histories that lead each client to our doors, but we know this: they are here now and they are welcome.

It's our honour and privilege to be a ministry that offers welcome, sanctuary and hope to people experiencing homelessness, poverty, addiction and mental health challenges. For over a century, ehm's Drop-In Centre has made this part of downtown Toronto a warmer, safer place. In more recent years, our residence has been home to some of Toronto's hardest-to-house singles and families, and our dental clinic has served those who would otherwise suffer without oral health care.

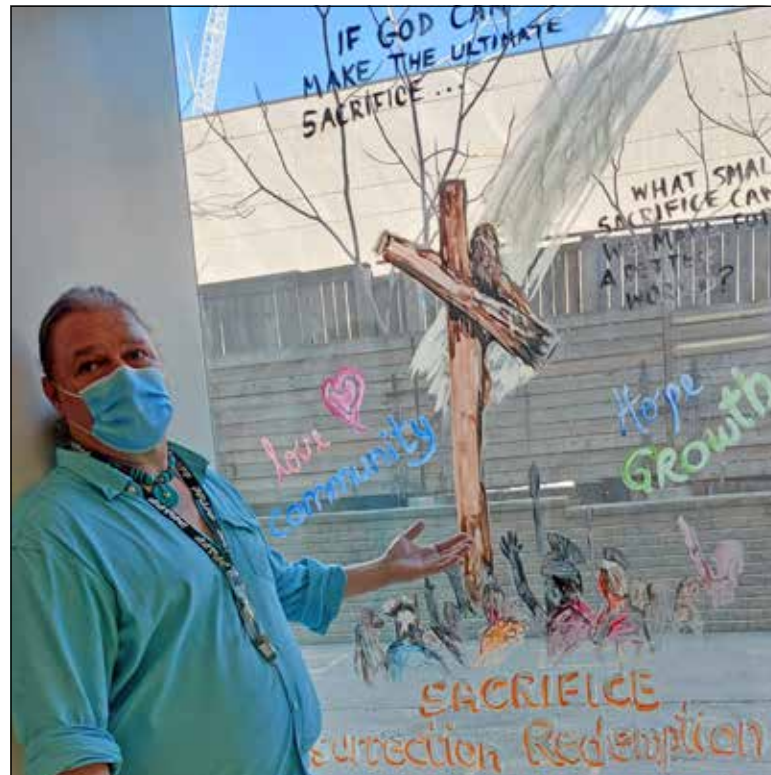
Hope is the foundational value of our latest initiative—the Peer Worker Program. Part of our rapidly growing Spiritual Care Program, the Peer Worker Program employs individuals with personal, lived experience with a

mental health or addiction issue. As you can imagine, gaining employment is a pivotal step in securing and maintaining housing.

Peer Workers intentionally share their lived experience as a means of providing support and connecting with others experiencing similar challenges. They have a variety of duties that support the day-to-day operations of the Drop-In Centre, such as helping clients access the showers and laundry facility. They help make the program run more smoothly and efficiently.

More than that, Peer Workers help clients access services sooner, make earlier interventions possible and make ehm's programs even more accessible for those considered to be the hardest to reach. Clients will generally open up quickly with Peer Workers and Peer Workers can pick up on a client's needs and create solutions in unique ways facilitated by their shared experiences. There's a kinship, a short-hand, among Peer Workers and clients that comes from having gone through the proverbial trenches together.

Peer Workers act as a bridge that connects even more disparate people



For Peer Worker Eric, his art is one way to connect and express his healing and faith journeys.

to ehm's community resources. And they offer themselves as living role models, sharing their own struggles and life journeys. Peer Workers help clients persevere through today's difficulties in order to reach for a better tomorrow. They model, share and inspire hope and love.

Being a Peer Worker isn't simply a job, it's a calling.

But being a Peer Worker is difficult. Trauma, addiction and mental illness are long-term challenges that don't disappear overnight just because a job's been secured. Peer Workers are still on their own healing journeys, working through their own recoveries, and are choosing to support clients experiencing all-too-familiar challenges. The dangers of

being triggered, defined as anything that prompts an increase in or return of symptoms, are very real.

That's why our Peer Worker Program is entrenched in the Spiritual Care Program.

Spiritual Care is rooted in the restorative power of offering unconditional love and grace that reaffirms and reawakens a person's sense of self, dignity and worth. Through the Peer Worker Program, the Spiritual Care team helps individuals work through their challenges, re-establish their sense of self and worth, and reconnect with community, all while maintaining employment that can help them break free from the cycles of poverty and homelessness. Peer Workers experience a unique blend of

pastoral care, employment support and life-skills training.

Unlike traditional jobs with standardized training and performance-measurement processes, this program is immersive, supportive and compassionate. Linear job progression certainly isn't expected here. The program is flexible, expecting and accommodating of difficulties.

The results over the past year have been profound. Peer Workers have secured permanent housing, overcome health challenges, fought for and maintained sobriety, learned to budget (after first learning how to set up a bank account), and experienced the joy of buying a piece of furniture. Peer Workers are rapidly becoming fixtures and mentors in the Drop-In. I'm so excited and grateful to envision how more lives will be changed as the program grows in the coming years.

The Presbyterian community has stood with ehm, faithfully supporting our growth and response to community needs. Our longevity is a testament to God's abundance and grace, and this new part of ehm's ministry came about because of the generosity of so many Presbyterians. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are always welcome to learn more at evangelhall.ca or connect with us at facebook.com/evangelhallmission.



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Quilting for Justice in Calgary



The quilts set up for their blessing in the sanctuary.

By Armiel Zacharias and Joni Ermter,
Grace Presbyterian Church
in Calgary, Alta.

On March 27, 2021, the Grace Quilters at Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., had a socially distanced gathering in the church's south parking lot. Due to the Covid-

related restrictions, it was their first in-person meeting in over a year. So, this gathering was a day that brought tears of joy to our friends who make up the Quilters.

The Grace Quilters are an active group. It's hard to believe that together they have made over 850 quilts since 2005. Back then, so many

volunteers showed up and started creating or asking how they could support the quilters. Some members didn't sew by machine, instead they gathered and became the group that hand-stitched all the binding. Others donated fabric and "notions." It is heartwarming to see the community show up and provide their support in so many ways, just as they did on that sunny Saturday in March.

The Grace Quilters have partnered with the Rotary Club of Calgary on a project in Mexico. The Rotary Club of Calgary has been working to build five homes in Mexico for families in need. The quilters have lovingly created beautiful quilts to present to five young families involved in the project. The five families consist of three sets of parents, two mothers,



The quilters at Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

a grandmother, a great-grandmother and nine children ranging in age from 3 to 16 years. The quilters have taken great delight in choosing the quilts and will be sending 16 handmade quilts in total.

Thank you, Grace Quilters, for all your hard work!



MISSION AND OUTREACH



By R. Aubrey Hawton, Elder,
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
in Coldwater, Ont.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is a small congregation with an average worship attendance of 30 to 35 in the charming village of Coldwater, Ont., about 90 minutes north of Toronto. While the congregation may be small, it has a huge presence in the community.

For over 20 years, the congregation has worked with the Best Lifestyle Residence, a home for about 30 adults who have limited incomes and need significant support daily. Church volunteers have hosted weekly BINGO games, colouring activities and craft events for the residents. An annual summer BBQ

Creating a Caring Closet in Coldwater

is also held, along with a Christmas party at which each resident is given a gift purchased by a member of St. Andrew's.

In 2019, two large, raised garden boxes were built and donated, allowing the residents to grow some much-appreciated fresh produce.

The free Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving dinners we hosted in pre-Covid times were always well attended by community members. The 2020 Christmas dinner provided free delivery of the full meals to over 200 community members, thanks to the assistance of the local Lions' Club.

About four years ago, the Inreach-Outreach Team at St. Andrew's met to consider further outreach opportunities. Michael Snively, one of the Inreach-Outreach Team members, floated the idea of setting up a "clothing bank," similar to a food bank, in one of the unused rooms in the basement of St. Andrew's. The rest, as they say, is history!

The idea was shared with the congregation and with the neighbouring Coldwater-Eady United Church Pastoral Charge and St. George Fairvalley Anglican Church, both of whom

had worked with St. Andrew's in our previous sponsorship of a Syrian refugee family.

Within a week, thousands of items of used and new clothing and accessories had been donated. Volunteers purchased shelving units and clothing racks, and some were even donated by their owners. Finally, a name was selected for this new ministry: The Caring Closet.

Congregational volunteers staffed The Caring Closet for the eight hours each week that it was open. Word-of-mouth, print and online advertising spread the news. Soon, customers were arriving on a daily basis, and a decision was made to add additional hours to our schedule. Community volunteers stepped up to assist with staffing The Caring Closet.

And then, COVID-19 happened, prompting several shutdowns and restarts over the past year and a half. In late June 2021, The Caring Closet was able to reopen permanently (we hope!). All of our volunteers have returned, the community has continued to provide thousands of donated items, and the customers are back. Online advertising, as well as lots of



great word-of-mouth recommendations, have brought us customers from up to a one-hour drive from Coldwater. During an average 14-hour week of open hours, we often see 50 to 75 people, many of whom have had their incomes adversely affected by the pandemic.

In addition to our walk-in customers, The Caring Closet has been able to provide clothing to the Best Lifestyle Residence in Coldwater; the Bayview Retirement Home in nearby Waubesa; Youth Haven, an organization working with vulnerable

youth in Barrie; La Maison Rosewood Shelter, an emergency shelter in Midland that provides support to abused and homeless women and their children; Uplifting Blessing Bags in Orillia; The Lighthouse homeless shelter in Orillia; and to the PCC's own Evangel Hall Mission in Toronto; as well as Kenora Fellowship Centre in Kenora, Ont.

If you ever find yourself fortunate enough to be in the beautiful Coldwater area, drop by St. Andrew's and The Caring Closet. We'd love to see you!



Communion in Neighbourhood



By Ty Ragan, Community Engagement Specialist, Knox Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

There's a bustle of activity at the Outdoor Cafe that's been set up on the lawn at Knox Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., as the vegetarian and Halal chicken hot dogs take their shifts sizzling on the grill. I wonder, could this have been what it was like in the Upper Room—family, friends and neighbours sharing food and conversation with Jesus?

The road to making a functional and welcoming outdoor space at our church began through partnerships within our community. Our neighbours and students from local post-secondary schools, Mount Royal University, University of Calgary and Bow Valley College, joined together to lend their support and help create a space for all to share at the table and build connection, which is something that has become even more important since the pandemic began.

A Neighbour Grant from the Cal-



PHOTO CREDITS: MAIA JARDINE AND NYALA PONCE

gary Foundation provided the capital, and partnerships were formed with donors and Youth Central. This allowed us to create space for community volunteers to share their gifts of gardening, art and carpentry, and for new Canadian youth (Youth Central & Immigrant Services Canada) and church youth to connect and build together. Each piece of Knox's outdoor community space is cultivated with connection, collaboration and neighbours. It is the community working to support one another.

In this outdoor space, you will find a take-as-you-need herb garden, with beautiful plants (bellflowers, day lilies, archangel, bleeding hearts and monkshood) that the volunteer gardener describes as a "liturgical garden" of Jacob's Ladder. A blue

planter in the front will soon hold white and blue plants for the St. Andrew's cross and a unique rose bush signifying hope for humanity. There's also an area for hopscotch, sidewalk chalk, a rock garden, a beautiful mural, picnic tables where neighbours can spend time talking while sharing a game of checkers or Tic-Tac-Toe, plus benches to rest or meet up at (a high premium in urban areas). You can borrow a book from our all-ages Little Free Library or take some food from one of the free pantries that have grown in our community.

Knox Calgary has always been about radically inclusive welcome, living out that which was seen in the life of Jesus. Our outdoor space, our relational hub, are pieces of the ministry a community within com-



munities has been called into. To grow a little hope, a little love, so that "welcome," that space of radical inclusion, can become a space many know they can enter and belong to—much like the table Jesus set in that Upper Room so long ago that we replicate, well beyond Sunday mornings, as our own act of hope and love.

This is the journey I am blessed to be called into at Knox Presbyterian Church, and what a fun time it has been.



MISSION AND OUTREACH

Choosing to Thrive



Terry working in the Raw Carrot kitchen in Paris, Ont.

Story compiled by Elizabeth O'Brian

*"In their lives, some individuals have been mocked because of their 'disabilities,' or made to feel they aren't good enough, smart enough, or have nothing to offer. (Because of the pandemic and their continued work at the Raw Carrot) they were told that they are **essential**. Can you imagine what that message can do for someone?"*

—Jennifer Klassen,
MCCO Raw Carrot, Kitchener

Even though Canada has so much wealth, there are still too many people living on the margins. There are people who are functionally illiterate,

others who have learning challenges, some who grew up in families of abuse or neglect and some who live with physical limitations or mental illness. But we all have something in common: the desire to live a purposeful life.

In addition to the challenges of meeting their basic needs, those who face barriers to employment suffer from social exclusion, poverty and a harm to dignity that accompanies the lack of participation in the paid workforce and community life.

That's why the Raw Carrot came into existence—to provide meaningful employment and livelihood security to individuals on social assistance who want to, and CAN, work.

The Raw Carrot envisions a world where everyone is meaningfully employed and able to meet their basic needs. We believe that a sustainable "Hand Up" is way more awesome than a hand-out!

The Raw Carrot hires individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to cook and package handcrafted gourmet soup that is sold in farmers markets and retail locations in the local community. Sales of the healthy soup fund the salaries of those working at the Raw Carrot.

Terry's Story

"I had a normal life—work, family, kids—until suddenly things changed. I started not feeling well, and I was tired all the time. I was unable to work. I reached out for help and



Raw Carrot staff working during COVID-19 at Innerkip Presbyterian Church in Innerkip, Ont.

went to see a psychiatrist. I was initially diagnosed with depression. Unfortunately, the anti-depressants I was prescribed started changing my thinking patterns. I started getting suicidal, I was sad all the time and I lost interest in everything.

"I attempted to take my life and was unconscious for three days on a respirator; thank God it didn't work out! I was in a psychiatric hospital for eight months and my family fell apart.

"When I was released, and still unable to work, I was able to get onto ODSP so that I could afford to live. On the road to recovery, properly diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and on the correct medication, I started to think about my next steps. However, I knew I couldn't handle full-time work in any sort of stressful work environment.

"Then I found the Raw Carrot.

"Living on ODSP is very tight. I receive about \$1,200 per month and

rent in my community is \$600 to \$900 per month. After paying rent, there is very little money left. With my money from the Raw Carrot, I can buy better groceries and eat healthier foods than I could previously afford. I can get fresh fruits and vegetables. I couldn't do this with just my ODSP cheque.

"I work with terrific people. They are kind and helpful. Right from day one, I felt welcome and encouraged...and able to succeed.

"My work at the Raw Carrot gives me something to do during the week to get out of the house and make some extra money. It helps me mentally and physically to be more alert and more organized.

"When you don't have anything to do because you don't have anything in your life, then you stop getting up early and you stop doing the things that matter in life. It's a vicious cycle that is hard to break. Now, I get out of the house two to three days per week

to go to work at the Raw Carrot. I'm needed there.

"I don't know if I'll ever be able to do a job in a traditional workplace, but my work at the Raw Carrot has given me a steppingstone to the next stage of my journey."



The Raw Carrot is supported in part by a bequest from The Presbyterian Church in Canada and through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing.



By Joan C. Cho, Editor,
The Presbyterian Message

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat..." begins the standard for faithful mail service. Members of the Atlantic Mission Society can now add "...nor pandemic..." as they somehow, amidst restrictions, found ways to deliver copies of *The Presbyterian Message* during the past difficult months. We are blessed that our

The Message Carries On

magazine is printed by a company whose owner, as a mission-minded Presbyterian, ensured that all deadlines were met.

When the first auxiliaries were ready to meet again—with masks, distancing and no lunch—*The Message* with its devotionals, prayer suggestions and mission studies was there, too. Where auxiliaries were cautious about gathering, *The Message* secretaries delivered it to members in their homes. It was a reminder to us of the AMS purpose to support the mission work of our church "with prayer, study and service."

In the past, the idea of circulating *The Message* electronically had been discussed, and during the pandemic it seemed that the time had come to

try it. The subscription form asks for email addresses where available and now we could make use of them. From the Editor's computer to that of the Circulation Manager and on to *Message* secretaries and subscribers, the issues of *The Message* went out through most of 2020.

As a result of those first efforts in delivering *The Message* by email, the AMS Executive decided to add one more option for subscribers, along with that of single or group subscriptions. For the same price as a group subscription, those who wish to reduce paper consumption and/or mailing costs are now reading *The Message* on their computer screens.

As well as news of and for AMS auxiliaries, *The Presbyterian Mes-*

sage carries information of interest to all Presbyterians. Recent articles include the work of PWS&D and Presbyterians Sharing, revisiting pioneer mission stories in Korea and the New Hebrides and "How Presbyterians Choose the General Assembly Moderator," written by Terri-Lee Hamilton, General Assembly Senior Administrator.

The Message mission study for 2021–2022 will centre on Indigenous peoples. In the August/September issue, the Statement Regarding Residential Schools by the Moderators of the 2019 and 2021 General Assemblies was reprinted. The Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald, General Secretary, also wrote of ways in which Presbyterians can be involved in this issue

and make a difference. Through the coming months, those suggestions will be explored in more detail.

While most subscribers are in the Atlantic region, we are pleased to know that there are Presbyterians across Canada who get *The Message*. We encourage more! For only \$20, you can have *The Presbyterian Message* mailed to your home nine times a year, or for \$15 have it delivered to your email address. And yes, if you wish, you can pay by e-transfer to presbyterianmessage@gmail.com.

For more information or to subscribe, go to pccweb.ca/ams or contact Kathy McKay, Message Circulation Manager, 55 Pine Bud Avenue, St. John's, NL A1B 1M8, 709-579-0721, PresbyterianMessage@gmail.com.

ECUMENICAL

Signs of the Times

A Geopolitical, Economic, Social and Religious Analysis of Canada

By Peter Noteboom, General Secretary,
the Canadian Council of Churches

Introduction

This essay is written from the perspective of the General Secretary of The Canadian Council of Churches as seen through the lens of shared ecumenical and interfaith endeavours in Canada with member churches of the Council. I write from a white, settler, male, urban Toronto, privileged standpoint. The lens of The Canadian Council of Churches includes the ecumenically shared experiences of Anglican-Lutheran, Eastern and Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Free Church, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, and Historic Protestant Christian traditions. Together, we acknowledge that nearly every community in Canada is home to communities of the Christian faith who belong to a member denomination of the Council. So, The Canadian Council of Churches and its members are on the historic territory of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples of this land.

I understand that the purpose of this essay is to provide an overview of the geopolitical, economic, social and religious trends in Canada, and to reflect on what churches are paying attention to that are the “signs of the times.” It goes without saying that this is a many-sided, complicated and really an impossible task. What follows is a tentative attempt to capture a few salient details, stories and principles that spring directly from recent experiences of ecumenical and interfaith work.

Geopolitical

Indigenous Peoples

Among the most important legacies of history in North America is on one hand the cultural history of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island and their care for the land over thousands of years, and on the other hand the shared complicity in cultural and ethnic genocide of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island by Canada, the United States and other settler governments. After centuries of displacement, disruption of livelihoods, suppression of Indigenous spiritualities, culture and languages, attempts to remake Indigenous peoples in the image of the colonizers, sex-trafficking, the system of church-run Residential Schools designed to “kill the Indian in the child” and repeated attempts at extinguishing Aboriginal title to the land, churches and people of faith are struggling to come to terms with what reconciliation could possibly mean. The KAIROS Blanket Exercise has been a powerful and effective educational tool for faith communities and beyond to visualize and experience that story.

In recent years, Survivors of Residential Schools were successful in calling the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools into existence and, thanks to those Survivors and their courage in telling their stories, a new wind has been blowing that has been guided by the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, especially Call to Action #48: Calling on

faith communities to formally adopt and comply with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation; respecting Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination in spiritual matters; and engaging in ongoing public dialogue and actions to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Just now, much of the work on legislation related to UNDRIP is being carried out in faith communities by the Faith in the Declaration coalition through support for Bill C-15 that mandates the government to take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the Declaration.

While many religious denominations and faith groups have repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, which were used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples (Call to Action #49), much work remains to be done to uproot those doctrines from minds, culture and the histories we tell about Canada.

Call to Action #41 on the topic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls—gender-based violence plus—remains a program priority for many Canadian churches.

The Christian Interfaith Relations body of the Council will take up as a program priority themes that are mentioned in Call to Action #60, “on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right, the history and legacy of Residential Schools and the roles of the church parties in that system, the history and legacy of religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate

such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence.”

Peoples of African Descent

The legacy of slavery, especially for Peoples of African Descent in Canada and for Canadian churches remains unrecognized. Many Canadians profess to be unaware that slavery was legal and promoted in Canada and many Canadian churches have yet to begin to think critically about the legacy of slavery in their own institutions and communities. Anti-Black hate crimes have been the most widely reported hate crime in Canada and the effects of systemic racism are ever with us.

The engagement of member churches in the legacy of slavery is much less prominent than the history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. Just last year, the Governing Board of the Council decided to support in principle the United Nations International Decade for Peoples of African Descent with its themes of recognition, justice and development, and to make anti-Black racism and anti-racism efforts a priority. Last year’s demonstrations in the United States after the murder of George Floyd galvanized Black Lives Matter in Canada—including calling

attention to racism in Canadian policing—and is shaking up people of conscience and workers for justice.

The United States

The other major geopolitical and cultural reality in Canada is our proximity to the United States. Canadian politics is feeling the impact of the rise of extremist political movements in the United States. Canada has plenty of its own extremist, populist and supremacist community groups across the country and the permissive polarized and divisive politics south of the Canadian border has changed and is changing political discourse in Canada. The leadership of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has begun studying and responding explicitly to new and re-emerging Canadian Christian Nationalist movements.

The US – Canada Safe Third Country Agreement regulating the entry of refugees and asylum seekers into Canada has been the subject of many court challenges, where the Council has played a prominent role. An application for a Supreme Court challenge is now in preparation and the Council will continue to be an intervenor alongside the Canadian Council for Refugees and Amnesty International Canada.



View from Amphitrite Point towards the Barkley Sound and the archipelago of the Broken Group Islands, Ucluelet, Vancouver Island, B.C.

ECUMENICAL

Global

Nuclear weapons and climate change are the urgent twin threats that threaten the very existence of Canada and all of creation as we know it. The Doomsday Clock now counts the 100 seconds to midnight using both nuclear risk, climate change and disruptive technologies.

Project Ploughshares—the peace research institute of the Council—plays a leading role in Canadian and global nuclear disarmament efforts, along with focused work on the weaponization of space, killer robot campaigns (lethal autonomous weapons systems), and arms control. Ploughshares has supported Canadian churches in calling for Canada to sign and ratify the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Canadian churches have been long and frequent advocates for nuclear disarmament where the Council enjoys deep consensus. Unfortunately, the government is not so interested.

Climate Justice is a high priority for many Canadian churches who are advocating for policy changes and investments, along with driving internal change through green church networks. For the Love of Creation is the platform for public policy advocacy and education efforts in faith communities. As one of the leading producers of dirty energy, Canada has a long way to go to migrate towards cleaner energy sources. The economic disruption of employment and industry, particularly in Western Canada, is significant. Pipelines are a continuing flashpoint where free prior and informed consent, consultation with Indigenous peoples and leadership, corporate investment and government subsidies and investments frequently lead to local conflict, protests and court battles.

The Canadian North experiences the effects of climate change more than many other regions on Earth. The effects of warming temperatures and warming oceans are magnified and are bulldozing the way of life and future of the Inuit and other peoples of the North—“a melting future,” as the young people have described it. Despair, suicide and feelings of powerlessness are concrete consequences of climate change—climate change that is caused by high rates of energy consumption in the Canadian South, yet felt and experienced by the people and the environment in the Canadian North.

Economic

Healing or ending poverty remains a primary focus of churches in Canada ecumenically. Ecumenical efforts have focused on policy responses to social determinants of poverty and advocating for a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy. More recently they have

added in the lens of relationality, shifting the perspective from scarcity to abundance, from vulnerability to resilience and from fear to trust.

Public figures frequently paint a picture of a trade-off between jobs, addressing poverty and tackling climate change. Churches have described the current situation as a spiritual and moral crisis that requires a spiritual solution. They have instead tied together ending poverty and promoting climate justice along with advocating for Indigenous rights as an expression of faith and a sustainable economy.

The pandemic has exposed the level of Canada’s dependence on recent immigrants and migrant workers, especially in agriculture, health and work. Most migrant workers receive low wages and few benefits, while poor working conditions have made them especially vulnerable to Covid. KAIROS has done significant work on migrant justice before and during the pandemic.

Social

The pandemic hit long-term care homes for the elderly the earliest and the hardest, and made immediately visible the poor conditions in long-term care homes. Early in the pandemic Canada had the highest proportion of deaths occurring in long-term care compared to other OECD Countries, and long-term care residents accounted for 81% of all reported COVID-19 deaths in Canada, compared with an average of 38% in other OECD countries.

The Council has advocated for universal access to palliative care, partially in response to new legislation on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). While there has been no church or faith community consensus on how to respond to the recent MAiD legislation, many churches and faith communities have been focused on opposing or limiting the legislation and its effects, especially the new extensions of the legislation into cases of mental illness and the removal or limiting the criteria of reasonable foreseeability of death. Many faith communities and medical practitioners are advocating for conscience protections, so that they are not obligated to refer patients to a doctor who may provide medical assistance in dying.

Life Sciences

The Council benefits from long-term engagement of member churches on issues of biotechnology. If the consumption of fossil fuels and the manipulation of natural resources at a macro level can result in massive climate change, on a micro level the developments in synthetic biology, CRISPR technologies and artificial intelligence can result in massive heritable changes to life forms

and ecologies, including the human genome. Powerful life- and genome-altering technologies are available publicly at inexpensive rates for do-it-yourself laboratories in your home or garage. The Faith and Life Sciences Reference Group at the Council continues to reflect on the promises and perils of biotechnologies, including their effects on the human person, and is increasingly focused on learning and the advocacy related to Canadian and global regulation of life-altering technologies and food systems.



Religious

The pandemic has sparked a movement towards greater inter-religious solidarity and co-operation. Municipal, provincial and federal governments have long ignored and kept their distance from religious communities but, when the pandemic hit, governments found that religious communities were important partners in compliance with physical distancing, stopping the spread of the virus and in public health efforts. Several new provincial interfaith roundtables have been formed as a result. In an historic initiative, at the start of the pandemic more than 80 religious leaders signed Hope, Gratitude and Solidarity: A Message to Canadians from Religious Leaders in Canada in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Later in the year, in another historic event, the Council cohosted—with interfaith partners—a virtual conversation between religious leaders and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the role of faith communities in a time of pandemic. And early this year the Council co-promoted—with interfaith partners—a public health session on the vaccine and immunization campaign with Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer. During this pandemic the scale of interfaith co-operation and the level of religious leaders’ engagement with the Federal Government is higher than it has been in many decades, if ever.

Many Canadians and especially people of faith continue to wrestle with Quebec’s decision to adopt a secular charter that bans religious symbols in

public spaces and for public officials. Judges, teachers, health-care workers, police officers and other public figures are banned from wearing religious head coverings, religious symbols in jewelry, or from carrying religious objects. Muslim women who are teachers and typically wear scarves are now forced to decide whether they can continue in their vocation as a teacher. Jewish judges or doctors, for example, are not allowed to wear a religious head covering when carrying out their duties. The legislation runs counter to both the Quebec Charter of

together. As the pandemic has carried on, it seems to have become easier for politicians to hurl epithets and criticism at one another through their Zoom screen rather than work for the common good around a committee table.

I am struck by the power of the new life-altering technologies. Attendance at recent events that discuss the phenomenon has been extraordinarily high. CRISPR and its applications, including human heritable technologies, are an area that demand more attention from faith communities before we struggle with the unintended or off-target consequences, in the way that we are now struggling with climate change. Venture capital and competition for research grant dollars with unbridled medical- and ecology-altering applications guided by volunteer self-regulation could spell another global threat.

Coming out of the pandemic, there have been extensive conversations about a just transition, or principles for a just recovery: put people’s health and well-being first, no exceptions; strengthen the social safety net and provide relief directly to people; prioritize the needs of workers and communities; build resilience to prevent future crises; build solidarity and equity across communities, generations and borders; and uphold Indigenous rights and work in partnership with Indigenous peoples. Will the inequities the pandemic made more visible deepen or will we address them? Will vulnerable populations, especially those in long-term care homes, continue to suffer from neglect and low standards of care? Will a transition to a greener economy be hurried along by lower rates of energy consumption or will unfettered energy consumption return with a vengeance?

Conclusion

This essay is in no way complete or comprehensive. It offers a partial snapshot of some ecumenical and interfaith trends and initiatives in Canadian society and Canadian churches today. No doubt, communal discernment on the signs of the times together will prove more fruitful for our analysis and shared work and prayer.



GATHERINGS



This summer, Camp Kintail in Goderich, Ont., ran on-site, day-camp programming, giving children opportunities to explore creation and grow in community together. Campers enjoyed the beach, rock climbing wall, high-ropes, archery, FLASH (Faith, Learning and Sharing) and so much more!



The staff of Camp Kintail in Goderich, Ont., got their summer off to a great start with a movie night outside the lodge.

GATHERINGS



During the month of June, Glenview Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., offered an outdoor Scavenger Hunt for children and young families. The 10 hidden clues led participants through the biblical story of Joseph and included simple activities for all ages. The Scavenger Hunt provided a fun and safe opportunity of outdoor learning for children and families after the long months of lockdown and stay-at-home orders in Toronto.



Lochwinnoch Presbyterian Church in Renfrew County, Ont., like so many congregations, increased their online presence during the pandemic. During the summer of 2021, a five-week message series called "From House to House" was shared, with the virtual congregation looking at accounts from the Book of Acts where the early church met from house to house. In addition to the worship, the Rev. Milton Fraser made a weekly home visit with a member from the congregation. During the visit, a short interview was recorded and the host read the scripture for Sunday. The online congregation was glad to see each other and learn a bit more from each interview. The five-week message series came to an end, but the "From House to House" segments continue, by popular demand. Pictured is Gwen Storie and her grandchildren during a "From House to House" visit.



The Mission Team of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ancaster, Ont., held their Spring Community Textile Drive on Saturday, June 26. The congregation received 500 bags of donations, the biggest collection to date! Pictured in the front: the Rev. John Read. Back row (left to right): Linda Bleue, Randy Raphael, Chris Payant, Sharon Payant, the Rev. Anne Yee-Hibbs, Pat Foley, Eli, the Rev. John Hibbs, Jenn Pooni.



The Mission, Outreach, Visitation and Education (MOVE) Committee of First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., continues to support local congregational care residences during the pandemic, even as the province emerges from lockdowns. In May, the committee made financial donations to both Sherwood Park Manor and Maple View Lodge. For Sherwood Park Manor, the donation will provide residents with a "Timmy's" night of coffee and doughnuts. The donation to Maple View Lodge will enhance the "virtual reality glasses" experience that the Lodge already has in place for their residents.

GATHERINGS



Clarkson Road Presbyterian Church in Mississauga, Ont., held a Drive-Thru Food Drive on Saturday, June 19, to help The Compass Food Bank and Outreach Centre get the shelves stocked for summer. As a partner church, it's been important to find ways to support The Compass throughout the pandemic as they have continued to support clients with their practical and spiritual needs. PHOTO CREDIT: MARILYN BRAUN, SHERIDAN COLLEGE PHOTOGRAPHY STUDENT



The congregation of Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sylvan Lake, Alta., felt blessed this summer with the return to in-person worship and fellowship together.



Hear the Good News: Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry edition. Taking inspiration from the Hear the Good News project initiated by the Session of Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I. (see page 24, *Presbyterian Connection* Summer 2020 edition), which had a goal of sharing the best ideas that Atlantic Synod churches had to offer, the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry gathered ideas that were implemented by the 24 congregations/13 pastoral charges and WMS Presbyterial within the presbytery and published them in a booklet. As the gathering of ideas took place during the pandemic, both pre-Covid and Covid activities were included. Thanks to Cheryl Gaver, Presbytery Ministry Animator, for overseeing the project. Pictured with Cheryl (middle) are Ruth Pollock, moderator, and Donna McIlveen, clerk. PHOTO CREDIT: DONNA MCILVEEN



Wednesday evening "Cool Summer Praises" (CSP) at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., started about 11 years ago and was interrupted in 2020 due to COVID-19. A CSP evening consists of a very light 45-minute program with singing of favourite folk songs, pop and praise songs, and ice cream served to not only members of the congregation but also to members of the Richmond Hill community who joined us. We were pleased to resume CSP evenings this summer while following COVID-19 regulations and safety protocols. It was good to see people we hadn't seen for the past 16 months. CSP was held every Wednesday evening from July 7 to August 18. This summer, the Rev. Duncan Jeffrey's theme was "Stories Seldom Told" about women in the Bible. PHOTO CREDIT: BILL VANDERBOOR

GATHERINGS



Camp Geddie staff member Jillian Roy, who designed the new Camp Geddie “Welcome” sign, is pictured with the Rev. Dr. Sandy McDonald, convener of the Camp Geddie Committee. Staff and campers celebrated the new sign. Camp Geddie is owned and operated by the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces, and is located in Merigomish, Pictou County, N.S.



Members of Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., are very proud to reveal the addition of two new rainbow “Friendship Benches” at the front entrance of the church building. The benches celebrate the congregation’s partnership with Mosaic and our commitment to create inclusive spaces that welcome all people in our community. Community passers-by have already been checking out the benches and resting their feet. May these benches celebrate visibly that God’s love includes everyone. Thank you to Mosaic for partnering with Armour Heights on this community project, the “bench team” for their time and coordination and to Rick King for expertly installing the benches.



Together again! After 17 months of worshipping and meeting online, members and adherents at St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., gathered in person again on July 11, 2021. The outdoor Sunday morning service, held on the church grounds, featured masked and distanced worshippers and live music. Following a summer break, plans are in the works for services to return to the sanctuary in September.

GATHERINGS



Centenarian Ruby Chalmers, from Morningside-High Park Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., turned 100 in June! Members gathered on the church lawn to walk over to Ruby's home together to wish her a happy birthday.



On July 10, 2021, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hillsburgh, Ont., hosted an outdoor book, games and puzzle sale, raising \$500 as part of their church fundraising initiatives. The craft pop-up sale was run by another member of the community. All items were donated by the community. One hundred and forty-three food items and a few cash donations for the East Wellington Food Bank were also collected. It was a fun day and a wonderful opportunity to see fellow members of St. Andrew's, Hillsburgh—and local faces, too!



The seasoned and dedicated volunteers who cooked, served and washed dishes at the Saturday "Take-Out Breakfast" held at First Presbyterian Church in Chatham, Ont., on June 26. First PC provides a take-out breakfast for the community every week. On this particular morning, 150 breakfasts were served.



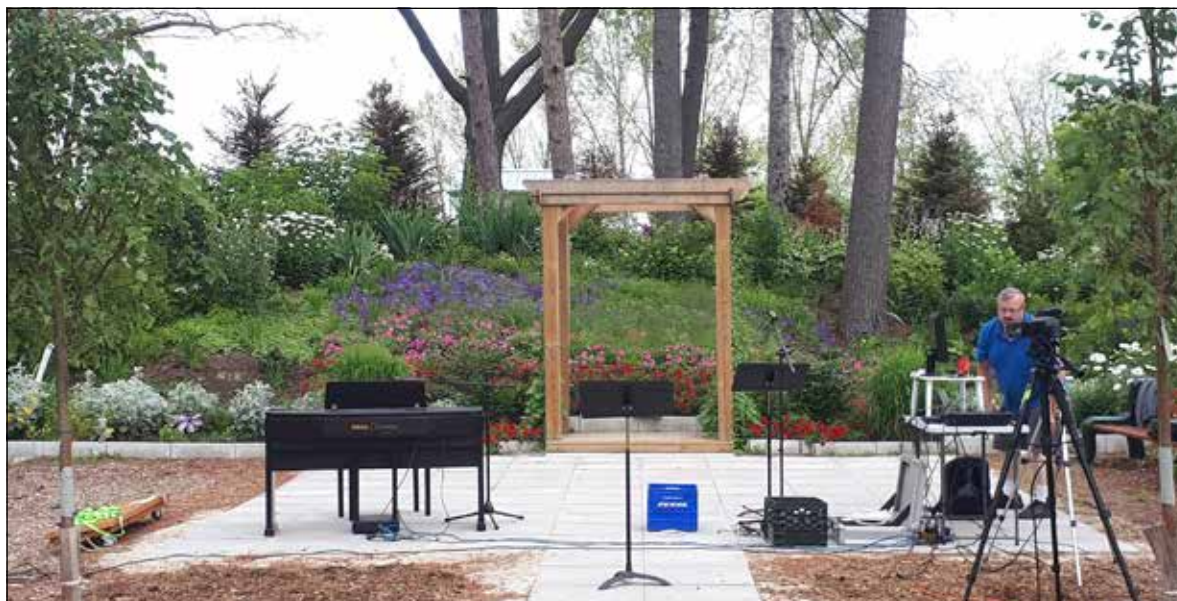
GATHERINGS



St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., continues to fulfill its mandate of community outreach even though it has not held a service since 2020, when COVID-19 brought an end to life as we all knew it. In June, we held an outdoor Community Clothesline clothing drive which was an unqualified success. The congregation donated 110 pairs of socks, 44 undergarments and \$75 in cash, all of which will assist the local Salvation Army with its community outreach. Clerk of Session Debbie Hynes (left) accepted a donation from congregation member Gail Arnold. Several people also dropped off aluminum pull tabs for the Ronald McDonald House recycling fundraiser and stamps for the Canadian Bible Society. St. Matthew's hopes to resume services in autumn, once restoration work is completed (following a fire in October 2019) and providing COVID-19 regulations allow for gathering.



For its Annual "Big Give" initiative, members at First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., raised funds to prepare and fill 25 "Blessing Bags" for clients of the Brockville and Area Food Bank. Church members shopped and filled 15 bags for families and 10 bags for transient/housing-insecure individuals. The bags contained personal care items, toys and treats for children, books, sunscreen, hats, socks and other items recommended by the Food Bank. The response from the congregation was so generous that another set of Blessing Bags will be provided to the Food Bank later in 2021. Thanks be to God from whom all blessings flow!



The serenity garden at Wasaga Beach Community Presbyterian Church, in Wasaga Beach, Ont., is in full bloom! This space has been used for weddings, art clubs and other community groups, and offers people in the community beautiful surroundings to have some peace and quiet contemplation. This year's first worship service in the garden took place on July 11. A vegetable patch is a new addition to the garden, and all of the produce will be donated to the local Food Bank. The garden was the inspiration and vision of Terry Densmore. Terry was an elder and member of the church who put in many hours developing, designing and maintaining the garden. Unfortunately, Terry lost his battle with cancer and passed away this summer at the age of 72. He was a tireless source of passion, vision and character who contributed in many ways to the church. His legacy lives on as the garden is well used by both the congregation and the community of Wasaga Beach. Terry will be deeply missed and will be forever in our hearts.



The Ross-St. Andrew's Presbyterian Cemetery Annual Decoration Service took place virtually this year on July 11. The Rev. Patricia Van Gelder led the service and meditated upon Exodus 13. Drew W. Vereyken, organist, played a selection of hymns for the service. The Cemetery, established around 1855, is on the outskirts of Forester's Falls, Ont., on the Kerr Line.

GATHERINGS



Presbyterian Atlantic Youth Synod, better known as PAYS, met on the weekend of May 14–15. Normally facilitated in person, this year, due to COVID-19, an online event was planned. Despite not knowing what to expect, it was important to facilitate a gathering that means so much to so many. We were not disappointed—over the two days, there were over 45 participants from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, P.E.I. and Nova Scotia! Our theme was “Half empty or half full: God will give you your fill!” Worship was praiseful, small groups brought great conversations, the guest speaker was inspirational and the games brought joy! God certainly was on the move! In times that have been so uncertain, and where pivoting is the norm, it was such a blessing to come together in fellowship, meet new friends and see others we hadn’t seen in a while. PAYS is looking forward to joining together again next year, in person (fingers crossed), or perhaps both in person and online. Thanks to everyone who was involved in the participation and support of this event, making it such a success!



Long-time congregant Cecil Cowan, at Tweedsmuir Memorial Presbyterian Church in Orangeville, Ont., celebrated his 100th birthday on August 15, 2021. Fellow Tweedsmuir members met him at his residence to regale him with a rousing chorus of Happy Birthday. Pictured above, accompanied by Music Director Julia Breen on accordion, are (left to right) Cecil's daughter Dianne Ryder, Suzanne and John Rayburn. In the second photo are (left to right) Judy Bryan, Jane Smith, Neil Overbeek, Edith Wilson, Julia, Dianne, Cecil, Suzanne, and John.

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The “Bag Lunch” program at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont., experienced increased need over the summer. Normally offered on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, volunteers were giving out an average of 45 lunches each day of the week.

RECOGNITIONS

Rejoicing in Port Colborne



The Rev. Adam Bartha.

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

Port Colborne, on the northeastern end of Lake Erie, Ont., is a community whose growth from the 1800s hinged on industry. The digging of the Welland Canal, part of the St. Lawrence Seaway, brought ships and shipping services; grain elevators and mills; and heavy industry—nickel and cement to name two. The industries attracted workers from all corners of the globe; as the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” People did, and Hungarians became one of the largest ethnic groups in South Niagara, arriving to create the canal and staying to smelt nickel, grind cement, mill flour and build our diverse community.

Within the community, Hungarians established churches. As in many

places throughout Ontario, those dedicated congregations are closing their doors, but their members remain active in the local Christian family.

In 2011, the First Presbyterian Church congregation in Port Colborne called the Rev. Adam Bartha as its pastor, a native of Nyíregyháza, Hungary, and ordained in the Hungarian Reformed Church (HRC). The Hungarian Reformed Church and The Presbyterian Church in Canada have a long history going back decades, supporting ministries throughout Canada, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. Adam had come to Knox College in Toronto on an HRC scholarship and stayed—our congregation’s good fortune and blessing.

Although Port Colborne is historically quite a Scottish congregation, there is a strong Hungarian heritage, as well—including our Hungarian-

speaking Clerk of Session. We plied the Rev. Adam with hurka but also with haggis, with kifli and kalács, butter tarts and apple pie. And the fishing is good here. He stayed.

We grew in faith together, and we weathered storms, including the selling of our historic church and replanting as The Gathering Place, a storefront ministry (see *Presbyterian Connection*, Fall 2020).

So, when Adam decided to take the grand step into Canadian citizenship, “great was the rejoicing.” We knew he was working at it with a passion. If you had him over for a meal, it was usual for Adam to throw strange and interesting Canadian facts into the conversation. And it paid off. He passed—perfect score, no less.

Celebrating Adam’s success would be essential, pandemic or no pandemic.

A Conspiracy Committee was formed. Plans were made, flexible



The Rev. Adam Bartha celebrates Canadian citizenship with a ride in a Camaro.

as we had no “swearing in” date. Members, adherents and friends were notified through our e-bulletin and sworn to secrecy. Adam never clicked to the fact that his email bulletin was not the one received by everyone else. The secret was kept.

But Covid combined with government restrictions presented challenges and the ceremony date was repeatedly postponed. We decided that the show would go on—on Canada Day—with a potential second wave of celebration once we had a date.

On July 1, Adam was drawn out of his apartment, on the promise of a surprise, to find a sidewalk lined with Canadian flags. He thought that was the surprise—until he got to the curb, at which point a cavalcade of 20 cars drove by, making a joyful noise. He thought that was the surprise. But the last car was his dream car: a Camaro, one built for the Transformers movies and made available for charity appearances by owner Matt Cuthbert, Niagara Furniture Bank. Adam jumped in for a ride. He thought that was the surprise. (You see where this

is going?)

But the pièce de résistance—the surprise—awaited in our leisure centre car park, where well-wishers lurked, masked and distanced. Gifts and a Mayoral letter of congratulations were presented. Goodie bags were distributed. Pictures were taken—possibly more of the Camaro than of Adam. It was...special. Blessed.

A battery of cell phones captured the celebration, and an amalgam of videos and photos is up on our YouTube channel—more homespun than Hollywood, but our own. (Google “Gathering Place Port Colborne YouTube.”) We’re also still waiting for a ceremony date but that’s okay—we have rehearsed “Rejoice” and we have it down pat.

“So, then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone...” (Ephesians 2:19–20 RSV).



Retirement of Principal Clerk, the Rev. Stephen Kendall

At the June 29, 2021, meeting of the Assembly Council, the Rev. Stephen Kendall, Principal Clerk, indicated his intention to retire following the 2022 General Assembly.

In a letter to the convener, Sandra Cameron Evans, Stephen said that it has been a “tremendous honour to serve our church in the position of Principal Clerk and Secretary of the

Assembly Council for what will be 24 years in 2022.” He also indicated that his commitment to doing all he can to assure a smooth transition to the next incumbent will include being flexible with the dates for an orientation plan. He looks forward to both retirement and the ways he will continue to serve Christ and his church.

In the process of appointing the

next Principal Clerk, the Assembly Council—the body that issues a call to accept an appointment—will confirm the position description, appoint a search committee and invite presbyteries to submit nominations. The Council plans to have a candidate ready for consideration by the next General Assembly.

Sandra Cameron Evans wrote

that, “it has been a privilege and an amazing learning experience to have worked with Stephen on the Assembly Council. His depth of knowledge and his commitment to The Presbyterian Church in Canada could always be depended upon to provide guidance and ensure things were done decently and in good order. I know Stephen will continue to serve the church.”

WOMEN

Global Media Monitoring Project Results



By Barb Summers, Associate Secretary,
PCC Communications

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), the World Association for Christian Communication's flagship activity, is the largest and longest-running research project on gender in the world's news media. Every five years since 1995, GMMP research has taken the pulse of selected indicators of gender in news media, including women's presence in relation to men, gender bias and stereotypes in news stories and other content. The results of the sixth and largest study on the portrayal and representation of women in the world's news media were released online on July 14, 2021.

The latest GMMP report includes data from 116 countries and covers 30,172 stories published in newspapers, broadcast on radio and television, and disseminated on news websites and via news media tweets. It presents a gender analysis on what, if anything, has changed in the presence, representation and voice of the subjects and sources featured in the news since the first GMMP was conducted in 1995.

The report includes data and analysis on gender representation in Covid-related news stories, and for the first time, the roles of Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and racialized groups in the news.

Sarah Macharia, Coordinator of the Global Media Monitoring Project, said that the results "reveal baby steps towards gender equality in the people in the news, especially in radio and television newscasts. Between 1995 to 2020, the largest strides towards parity have been in radio news. Among legacy media, television has traded places with newspapers as the medium in which women appear most. What is startling about the GMMP numbers overall in the period since 1995 is just how slow the pace

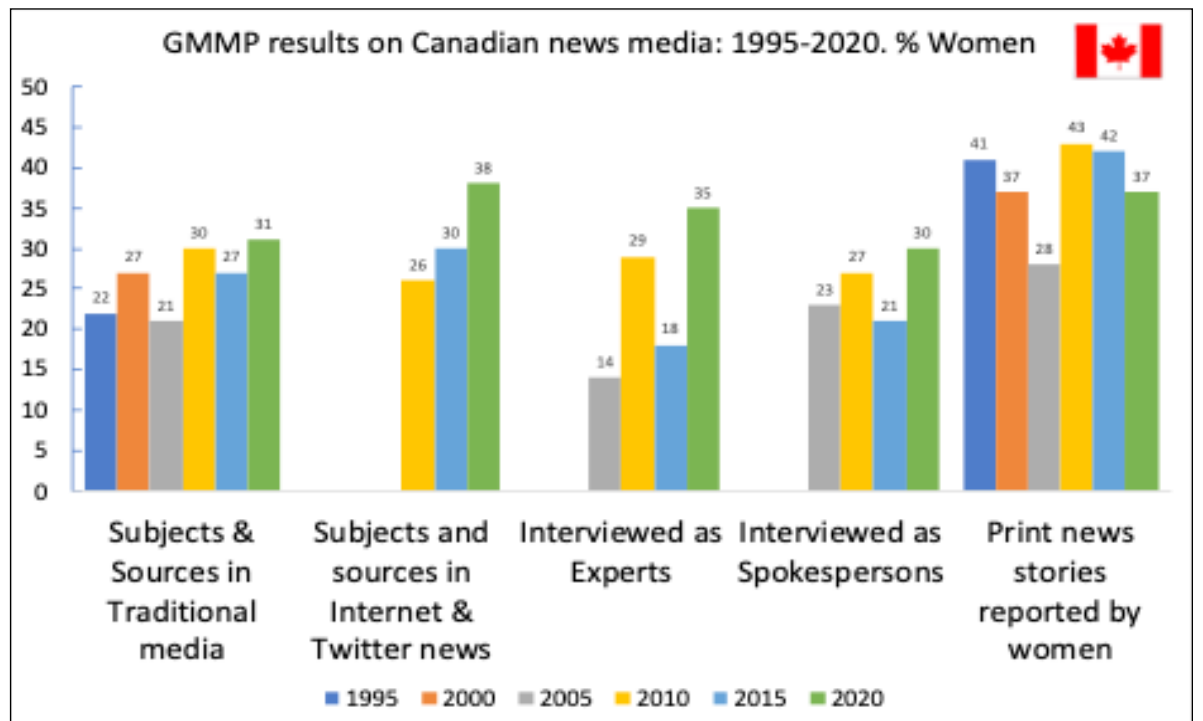
of change towards parity has remained. Considering that women are half the population and the numbers of those participating in the public space have increased considerably, it is clear that the news media still have a long way to go to reflect reality."

Philip Lee, General Secretary of the World Association for Christian Communication, underscores media literacy at educational settings: "The GMMP demonstrates that change is possible, even when it happens too slowly. But we must remember to move beyond reshaping the policies of news outlets and to educate young children and adults in how to see what lies behind the news and how discriminatory attitudes are embedded. Media literacy/education at the level of elementary and secondary schools and on through university will change perceptions and contribute to greater gender justice in society."

"GMMP 2020 picks up a major element of discrimination, telling us that women and women's voices are shockingly absent from global news coverage. Reporting is not only subject to substantial male bias—it is perpetuating it. This has to be turned around. The news industry must adopt codes of conduct that define and actively redress gender discrimination and stereotyping, starting with an increase in women's leadership within the media industry."
—Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director

Patterns

Glass ceilings appear to be setting in on certain important news media gender equality indicators, while others are edging upwards. While the past five years have seen small, incremental changes towards parity in subjects and sources, particularly in broadcast news, the pace of change remains glacial. However, there has been significant progress towards gender balance in news reporting; the role of women as television news reporters is more prominent now than ever, with 48% of global televised news being reported by women.



Women as Subjects and Reporters in Canadian News Media from 1995 to 2020

There has been an increase, albeit intermittently, in the presence of women as news subjects in traditional media in Canada from 1995 to 2020, from 22% to 32%. Online, such as on Twitter, there has been a steady increase in women as the subjects of news items, from 26% to 38% from 2010 to 2020. Print news stories reported by women show a fairly steady increase in 2015 at 42% but dropped to 37% in 2020. The percentage of women subjects who appear as expert sources was reported at 35% in 2020, a significant increase.

Gender in News Media Coverage of COVID-19

Even during ordinary times, inequalities due to gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and other social markers exist. Among those who lost their jobs in the low-income and wage-earning categories, women are the most adversely impacted. Women form the majority among essential workers, and yet they have to take care of their children at home and their schooling. The rate of domestic violence across the spectrum has risen significantly during the pandemic.

"What the COVID-19 crisis has unveiled is the already existing systemic disparities that impact women and

people of colour," said Dr. Glory Dhar-maraj, U.S. Coordinator and President of WACC-North America. "GMMP 2020 has exposed the gap in the presence of female experts in the media." As the graph shows, in COVID-19-related stories, in politics and government, globally 22% of women subjects appear as experts. In Canada, the percentage of female experts in politics and government is a mere 17%.

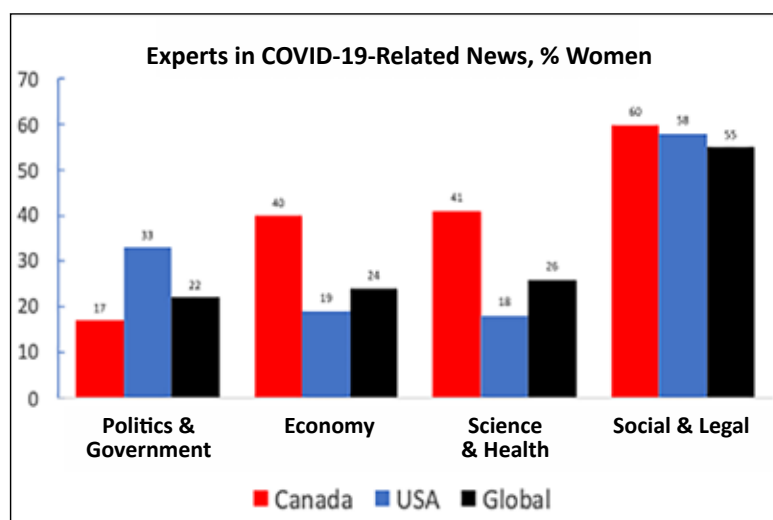
History and Background

The GMMP is coordinated by the World Association for Christian Communicators (WACC), a global, non-governmental organization that promotes communication rights for social justice. The GMMP is a collaborative effort of various women's rights organizations, grassroots groups, media associations, faith-based/inter-faith organizations, university students and researchers around the world. UN Women, the lead United Nations entity on gender equality, has supported GMMP since 2010.

To learn more about the Global Media Monitoring Project and the results from the latest report, visit whomakesthenews.org.

"Canada is proud to be a pioneering participant in the GMMP. Even with global crises in the economy, health, politics and the environment these past 25 years, we have seen how women figure in the news. We are glad to have contributed once again to this significant, ground-breaking research with the hope that women from across the globe will be granted the attention and respect that we all deserve."

—Veronica Silva Cus
National Coordinator, Canada



WOMEN

Women's Inspirational Stories Honoured

By the WISH Committee

Since the founding of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, women have been serving the church and doing mission. Their involvement and service has been central to the life of the church. Through the years, there have been many inspirational stories of faith—some have been shared but many have not.

Why share these stories?

- Inspirational stories, especially during difficult times, like the pandemic, can lift our spirits.
- Inspirational stories can give us

a road map to stronger faith.

- Sharing inspirational stories of faith is how we pass on the faith to the next generation.

We would like to invite groups to submit women's inspirational stories from within your church family. Your choice might be someone who works tirelessly in her local church, or someone who has envisioned and launched a specific accomplishment, or someone who has spanned a wide body of work and accomplishment within the church.

At the next National Presbyterian Women's Gathering in May 2022,

we will be honouring women's inspirational stories of faith.

Submissions must be made by January 15, 2022. Provide a short description of your reason for wanting your candidate recognized at presbyterian.ca/WISH-form. Note that we are not able to accept post-humous submissions.

Recognition will be given to PCC women, including the laity, elders, diaconal ministers, missionaries and clergy who have been diligent in contributing to the life and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.



The Butterfly Tree of Hope



St. Andrew's Barrie WMS lifelong member the late Pat Watt in 2018 in front of the Butterfly Tree of Hope.

By Pam Watt, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Barrie, Ont.

In 2018, the Women's Missionary Society at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Barrie, Ont., launched a new fundraiser: The Butterfly Tree of Hope. Over the years, our WMS has seen the group get smaller and those members grow into their golden years. We wanted to have a fundraiser for our local, national and international WMS projects by having a fundraiser that would not be a huge amount of work. Pam Watt, WMS vice-president, presented the idea to the members who all loved it! The butterfly is a symbol of life, endurance, change and hope. For a \$10 donation, members of St. Andrew's could sponsor a butterfly to go on our Butterfly Tree of Hope in the sanctuary. They could indicate if it was in memory of someone, for a noble cause like world peace, or in support of someone who has health issues.

The campaign launched in mid-February and continued until the Sunday before Easter. After Easter, we had a dedication for our Butterfly Tree of Hope. The campaign has continued and each year since its inception we have raised over \$1,000 for WMS projects.

During the pandemic, we were unsure whether we should continue the initiative, but we understood it was a time where all needed some extra hope, plus there were people who truly supported our Butterfly Tree of Hope. Yes, even during the pandemic, the generous donations of our St. Andrew's family helped us surpass \$1,000. Next year, we hope to go beyond our church walls and bring this fundraiser to the community to help us in doing the WMS mission work—locally, nationally and internationally.



The Butterfly Tree of Hope.









Photos, videos and images for worship:
presbyterian.ca/worship-images







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Submissions due November 15.
Details at knox.utoronto.ca/hdd.



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INTERNATIONAL

JAI Olive Tree Campaign: Keep Hope Alive



By International Ministries

The olive tree is a symbol of peace, wisdom, prosperity and happiness. For many, including Palestinians, it is also an ancient source of basic livelihood and nutrition. However, since 2001, Israel, through its military and settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, has uprooted, burnt and destroyed hundreds of thousands of olive trees belonging to Palestinian farmers in order to expand settlements, build roads and build walls. Most of these trees were hundreds and thousands of years old.

In response, the East Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) launched the Olive Tree Campaign in 2002. They invited partner churches and organi-

zations around the world to sponsor an olive tree for USD \$20 (CAD \$30). Sponsorship covers the cost of the young plant, transfers, wood sticks and plastic covers distributed with the trees, the production and distribution of plaques with sponsors' names placed in each planted field, JAI administration costs and other miscellaneous implementation costs of the project. Two-year-old, solid, young plants, in agriculture tubes are used in order to optimize survival potential.

In the first year of the campaign, 2,000 olive saplings were distributed among farmers. Since then, the campaign has helped 15,000 Palestinian households plant 200,000 olive trees. This sign of solidarity and support has allowed Palestinian farmers to continue to stay on their land and earn a living. It has strengthened their resilience and kept alive their hope for a better future.

Maheer Salem Hasan from Jorit Al-Shamaa village, south of the Bethlehem area, is one of many Palestinian farmers who has received support from the Olive Tree Campaign. His land is next to an Israeli bypass road controlled by the Israeli military. Even though he faces constant threat and harassment, he is determined to maintain his land. "They do not allow us to rehabilitate the water well and we cannot use it to collect water. Neither are we allowed to build stone wall cladding panels. And they keep



harassing us. Every time we get a tractor to cultivate our land, the Israeli army confiscates it. We will remain (steadfast) in this land no matter what they do and with freedom we will live on it. What needs one year, let it be three-four years. The most important thing is that we maintain our land and the field remains planted while we keep eating from its fruits."

In 2022, the Olive Tree Campaign will celebrate its 20th anniversary. To mark this special occasion, the organizers hope to plant 40,000 olive trees with the help of supporters. In asking partners to promote this campaign, Nidal Abu Zulf, Director of Joint Advocacy Initiative, said, "All the indicators show that we can make it, especially since we have information from partners that they have already allocated some 25,000 trees. I hope you can jointly with all the OTC partners worldwide realize this goal. Thank you for your continued support and solidarity."

The celebration will include collecting and distributing olive trees to eligible farmers, organizing an international Olive Tree Planting Activity (Feb. 5–14, 2022), hosting five



Olive trees planted in the Bethlehem area.

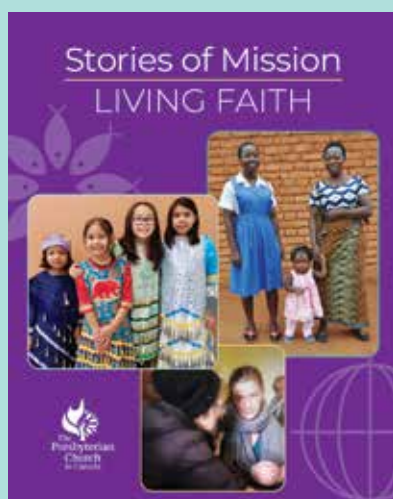
international youth delegations to participate in planting activities and organizing an international olive picking program, Oct. 15–24, 2022.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been supporting this life-giving campaign since 2018. Donations are sent every January in time for the planting season. Since 2018, PCC congregations, mission groups and individual donors have sponsored 1,002 olive trees. These donations have helped Palestinian farmers like

Maheer Salem Hasan and his family protect their land and keep hope alive!

If you would like to be part of this campaign, donations can be made by sending a cheque to the PCC's national office designated to the olive tree campaign or online at presbyterian.ca/olive-tree.

For more information about the project, contact Lily Ko, International Ministries Program Coordinator at Lko@presbyterian.ca or 1-800-619-7301 ext. 254.



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



PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Global Reach through Local Action to End Hunger

By Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Director

"If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday" (Isaiah 58:10).

The world has over 700 million people who go to bed hungry every night, who don't know if they will find sufficient food to feed their family the next day. That is eight percent of the world's population. While some of these people are located here in Canada, the vast majority of the world's hungry (93%) live in the poorest countries of our planet, mostly in Asia and Africa (UN State of Food

Security report).

From coast to coast, growing projects offer the opportunity for Presbyterians and their neighbours to actively work to help end hunger—coming together to plant, tend, harvest, sell and donate the proceeds from a crop.

Farmers in Canada dedicate time, machinery and land to grow crops that are sold to generate revenue for PWS&D's work with Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Local suppliers often donate seeds, fertilizer and other inputs to the projects, allowing for an even greater return on the crop and the value contributed to the Foodgrains Bank. Those funds are then allocated to various projects, of-

Members of the Danforth Grow Hope team gather at the project site.



ten matched 4:1 with funds provided by the Government of Canada.

Last year, 18 growing projects supported PWS&D's work. Located in Alberta (1), Ontario (14), Quebec (1), and Prince Edward Island (2), these growing projects contributed \$307,336 to PWS&D's account at the Foodgrains Bank. That helped us to carry out over \$2.4 million worth of programming to provide food security to the most vulnerable populations. This included projects in Afghanistan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen among others.

But what about urban congregations? Can they be part of this story?

Absolutely. "Grow Hope" projects help connect urban congregations with rural growing projects to sponsor acres that are farmed on their behalf.

There is currently one Presbyterian example, located in Toronto: the Danforth Grow Hope project. Four churches (two Presbyterian, one United and one Anglican) have agreed to sponsor 10 acres per year at \$500 per acre. The proceeds of the harvest are donated to the respective CFGB accounts proportionately and programmed overseas after being matched.

Grow Hope projects provide a wonderful opportunity to integrate

issues of global food justice in worship and Sunday School classes, and to initiate fundraising events to support the project. For example, in my church, the choir donated all of the proceeds from their Christmas concert to the Grow Hope project. These events provide opportunities to raise awareness about our Christian response to hunger in the world.

Through Grow Hope and growing projects, you can be a light for many people in the world. If your congregation is interested in starting a Grow Hope project, contact us at pwsd@presbyterian.ca and we will help you find a growing project you can sponsor.

Education Helps Make Dreams Possible



In Afghanistan, PWS&D education projects provide girls with the opportunity to gain skills, address gender inequality and break cycles of poverty.

By Stephanie Chunoo,
PWS&D Communications

Doctor, teacher, engineer and accountant are just a few of the aspirations kids might have for their future. Yet, nearly one in five children around the globe does not have access to quality education. Before the pandemic, around 260 million school-aged children didn't get to go to school, and now even more students are missing school due to COVID-19, disrupting learning and putting at risk achievements already made in improving global education.

Education is vital to overcoming poverty, reducing gender and economic inequality, providing the necessary skills to obtain meaningful employment, and fostering a peaceful and tolerant society.

However, multiple barriers continue to prevent children from accessing these opportunities. Lack of resources (e.g., uniforms, school supplies and textbooks), life in conflict zones and inadequate infrastructure are just a few of the hurdles they face. Girls experience even more challenges in accessing education, including early marriage and cultural norms and

practices that place less value on girls' education. Additionally, girls, when forced to walk long distances to school, are placed at increased risk of assault and harassment.

Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals aims to provide free, equitable and quality education for all children. PWS&D is passionate about bringing about a world in which all children have access to education.

PWS&D works with partners in Guatemala, Afghanistan and Malawi to help vulnerable children get the education they need to access new opportunities for brighter futures. These education programs provide children with classroom facilities, tutoring, textbooks, supplies, uniforms and scholarships to attend school. Teachers receive training in new and innovative ways to share knowledge with their students, leading to better education outcomes.

In some communities, where there is a need to generate greater awareness about a child's right to education, PWS&D works with local religious leaders and parents to help them understand how quality education can help children overcome challenging circumstances and con-

tribute to the sustainable development of their communities.

COVID-19

As COVID-19 added even more obstacles to education, PWS&D partners worked to ensure access to water and sanitation services and hygiene supplies. Additionally, teachers have been empowered with skills to provide remote learning services and study guides for students learning from home. Families also received food packages and hygiene materials to assist them during the pandemic.

A Dream Achieved

In Guatemala, one part of PWS&D's education program with the Francisco Coll School includes providing continuing education scholarships to graduating students.

Ingrid was one of six students to receive this scholarship, which enabled her to continue her studies. Today, she proudly holds the title of an accountant. "I want to thank God for the blessings and opportunities that were given to me through the support received from the Francisco Coll Educational Center, an establishment in which I took my first steps in the process of my education. I humbly



Ingrid Marizol Zapeta Alvarez, with her parents, proudly holds the certificate she received after completing her studies to become an accountant.

appreciate the financial contribution that you have given me to achieve an important stage in my life."

Through education, many other children around the world like Ingrid will have a better chance to access opportunities that will help them break out of the cycle of poverty, build brighter futures for themselves, contribute to the peaceful development of their communities, and most importantly, achieve their dreams.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Food Aid Improves Women's Rights



Amina received food assistance that enabled her to play a larger role in household decision making. PHOTO CREDIT: CWSA.

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

Before the pandemic hit, many people in Afghanistan were already struggling with increased food insecurity, unemployment and poverty due to decades of ongoing conflict. COVID-19 has only intensified these issues, pushing over 150,000 Afghans living in neighbouring Iran back into an already fragile country. Households have been struggling to stay afloat and are finding it challenging to access food to meet their basic needs.

In response to the devastating effects of COVID-19, PWS&D provided 1,100 of the most vulnerable households—480 of which were women-headed — with monthly cash transfers. PWS&D's local part-

ner, Community World Service Asia, conducted a total of five monthly distributions.

Each family received \$90 USD a month to purchase much-needed food and essential items from local markets, which in turn served to support the local economy. Many of the distributions took place over the harsh winter months, meaning the money was vital in combating food insecurity. Distributing cash electronically to carefully selected participants allowed for an effective and safe way to assist in times of hardship. It also offered the greatest flexibility for families to meet their specific needs.

Alongside prioritizing women-headed households, the project focused on empowering women while

ensuring the well-being and food security of their families and communities.

Ayesha, a 35-year-old mother of six, was selected as a community-level leader. In this role, she worked with the project team to train the recipients of the cash assistance on appropriate use and any challenges that might arise.

"I started holding meetings with the women in my village to educate them about their fundamental rights and needs and mobilized them to take part in decision making within their households. I also led sessions on awareness around COVID-19, emphasizing the virus's risk, harmful consequences and preventative steps," said Ayesha.

Amina, a 36-year-old mother of six shared her experience: "My husband works as a farmer and earns a meagre monthly income. He hands over a good part of the money to me to manage household expenses. My husband often checks up on how I am spending the money to ensure it is not wasted and is only spent on essentials. Many times we fight over money.

"The first tranche of cash [from the program] was provided to me directly. I felt independent to use the money as I wished and prioritized using it for household expenses, but this time, without my husband's constant supervision. The cash assis-

tance was very helpful. I immediately purchased bread, tea, vegetables and yogurt. My children and husband were so happy to see healthy and complete meals every day. Since the first distribution, my husband and I have had no conflicts over money or how I manage it."

In many circumstances in Afghanistan, men control access to and decisions about how money is spent. By providing cash assistance directly to women, the project has increased women's participation in decision making in their households.

In a survey conducted before the project, only 26% of households indicated that they mutually decided on household expenses, including food and clothing. Five months later, 42% of participating households now report shared decision making on household expenses.

Amina also mentioned that she's been able to save some of the cash assistance for future emergencies. "It is very important that we save some money just in case there is any kind of emergency, as this area is prone to natural disasters. These days my husband is often praising me for my ability to manage the household expenses efficiently and save money at the same time."

Increased control over household finances by women project participants has helped them build their confidence and empowered them to



Ayesha provided training to community members on COVID-19 prevention, nutrition and women's rights. PHOTO CREDIT: CWSA.

participate in family decision making more actively.

Provided with equal opportunities, women are able to contribute much more as they tend to prioritize their family's essential needs. By focusing on promoting the leadership and participation of rural women, this food assistance project helped improve the role and ability of women to address many of the issues that affect their lives, their families and their communities.

* This project also received generous support from the Government of Canada and Canadian Foodgrains Bank members—the United Church of Canada, the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (Anglican), World Renew (Christian Reformed) and Nazarene Compassionate Ministries.

** Article written prior to current events unfolding in Afghanistan.

In the Words of a Teenage Entrepreneur

By Emma Clarke,
PWS&D Communications

"Now, my family and I always have vegetables available."

Hearing this comment from a 16-year-old may not strike us as unique. But in a world struggling from the effects of climate change, political unrest and drastic inequality, food security is not a given. In fact, eight percent of people around the globe do not have reliable access to sufficient nutritious food. With the COVID-19 pandemic limiting people's livelihoods, month after month, the situation for families facing extreme hunger continues to worsen.

Osline Pauleus lives in Haiti, a country experiencing one of the highest levels of food insecurity in the world. In this country, that is half the size of Nova Scotia, over one million people face emergency levels of hunger every day, and almost half of the population is in need of immediate

food assistance.

Agroforestry youth clubs in Haiti are run by Konbit Peyizan (PWS&D's partner) and take a multi-faceted approach to education. Young people discuss how to live peaceably with each other and with the land on which they live, as they develop skills for growing food items that can survive the unpredictable climate. They also learn that everyone has the right to take leadership.

When Osline discusses her participation in the agroforestry youth club, she expresses joy at having become a leader in her community and relief that her family can eat—but each word resonates with concern for those around her. This is her testimony.

"My name is Osline Pauleus, I'm 16 years old, and I live in an area of Wondo called Charye. Although I had heard a lot about the Konbit Peyizan youth club, I had never joined. One day, I decided to go and see what

the other kids were doing in the club. When I arrived, I saw that the activities they were doing were really interesting, so I decided to join the club.

"From the club I learned a lot of things, like how to plant my own garden and use natural resource management techniques. I also learned about health and hygiene, how to use and develop my talents, how to be more courteous and polite, and how to teach others what I had learned.

"Before joining the club, I didn't even know that I have the same rights as adults. Learning all these things made me really happy.

"After receiving some training in the club's demonstration garden, I decided to start my own kitchen garden, where I planted okra, peppers, tomatoes, jute leaves, eggplant and spinach. Before, I was only able to eat these vegetables once in a while because I would have to buy them at the market which is far away from my house. Thankfully, I can now find all

these vegetables in my own garden. My family always talks about how useful this garden is for us, because we are now able to save the money we used to spend on vegetables to use for other essentials that will help the family."

Osline's initiative in her own garden made a big difference to both her family and the broader community.

"My garden also seems to have become a point of interest in the community, because everybody who walks by always admires it. When people from the area visit my garden, I take the time to tell them how I started it. They go on to replicate the same vegetable-planting techniques in their own gardens. I'm glad because I can see that the club activities are really good for the community."

Global food insecurity will not be solved overnight. But the small actions taken today are like the seeds planted in Osline's garden—small



After creating a thriving garden with support from PWS&D's youth club in Haiti, Osline Pauleus helped others in her community do the same. PHOTO CREDIT: MCC HAITI

things that grow over time, inspire others for an even bigger impact.

*This project is supported by Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

India COVID-19 Response



Community awareness sessions teach COVID-19 prevention and address vaccine hesitancy. PHOTO CREDIT: ACT ALLIANCE.

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

In early May 2021, India's population experienced a devastating surge in COVID-19 cases. Creating threats to the health-care system and already vulnerable families, the need was enormous. Within a month, COVID-19 cases had reached unprecedented levels with over 400,000 new

cases per day.

In response to PWS&D's urgent appeal for funds, Presbyterians from across Canada gave generously. To date, we have received over \$110,000 to address immediate needs related to access to health care and supplies, as well as training to prevent community spread and encourage vaccination.

Those funds have been allocated to our local partners, the ACT Alliance and Canadian Foodgrains Bank, in order to achieve the greatest impact.

With our partner, the Christian Medical Association of India, we are assisting 20 medical hospitals to:

- Improve and expand the re-

sponse of hospitals providing care to Covid patients, by supplying personal protective equipment, online sharing platforms and community helplines.

- Support the marginalized and vulnerable through data collection, providing vaccines and training doctors, nurses, administrators and chaplains.
- Partner with churches to support hospitals and communities with training for bereavement counselling.

With partners at the ACT Alliance, support is being provided to:

- Work with community-based organizations that include local church leaders and community members to address risk prevention, mitigation and vaccine uptake.

- Help Covid patients or at-risk people meet immediate needs, including medical expenses.
- Strengthen hospital capacity by contributing necessary supplies.
- Raise awareness of the increased risk of gender-based violence in a pandemic.

Through Canadian Foodgrains Bank, we supported 3,620 families in three districts of northeastern India with three monthly cash transfers of \$33 to purchase food and other essential items, such as medicine and sanitary items. The project prioritized women and girls and supported government vaccination efforts. This project was implemented by EFICOR (Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief), a partner of Tearfund Canada (a Foodgrains Bank member).



Mrs. Lalduktaki, with her eight-month-old baby, received food assistance through a PWS&D-supported project. PHOTO CREDIT: EFICOR.

Mrs. Lalduktaki, a 42-year-old mother of three, lives with HIV. Her husband was out of work because of the pandemic and the family was unsure how they would afford food. On receiving the cash transfer, she said, "We have been able to buy rice, vegetables and milk for the baby. I am so grateful that we have received support when we needed it the most."

Get Moving for Food Security

By Stephanie Chunoo,
PWS&D Communications

In a world filled with need, we have a chance to create positive change—and it's as easy as taking a hike, dancing or going for a bike ride.

On Saturday, Oct. 2, you are invited to join PWS&D in the Ride for Refuge—a Covid-safe, family-

friendly fundraising event. This year, we'll once again be raising funds for PWS&D's food security programs around the world. With food insecurity on the rise due to COVID-19, the need is greater than ever.

This year's Ride for Refuge will look very similar to last year's. Along with the classic cycling and walking options, participants can also

choose from various activities that can be done at home and virtually. Choose from volunteering, gardening, making music, baking and much more to raise funds and awareness this year. Be creative!

Your participation will help deliver seeds, tools and training to farmers to help increase crop yields, improve nutrition and address the impacts of

climate change. Farmers and their families will also learn how to market and sell their products, which will provide an income that can be used to access health care, purchase nutritious food and send their children to school.

Register today at [WeRespond.ca/RideforRefuge](https://www.werespond.ca/RideforRefuge).



Team Lightning Bolt from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont.

Champions' Corner

By Emma Clarke,
PWS&D Communications

Families whose homes or latrines were washed away by unseasonal heavy rains... Farmers whose maize or vegetables struggle to grow because the land is too dry... Environmental refugees facing an uncertain future...

Many of the needs PWS&D responds to are connected to climate change, the effects of which are often experienced most severely by people living in low-income countries.

The plants, wildlife and oceans around us are not only gifts from God, but they represent a great responsibility for us to steward. Out of love for creation and those who share

it, many churches across Canada are taking action.

A Day in the Life of a Champion: Femmy Birks

"What is a place in creation that makes you feel close to God?" This is one question Femmy Birks and the Global Partners Committee at Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, Ont., have been asking their community.

"As has been said by many these days," Femmy, a PWS&D Champion, said, "we are in the midst of a climate crisis. In order for God's glory to shine forth, as people of faith who love God and this world that was created for us to thrive in, we need to seriously reflect on what this climate crisis means for us all—and for fu-



This summer, Knox, Waterloo, hosted a virtual Vacation Bible Camp celebrating the earth, in partnership with Erb Street Mennonite and Waterloo North Mennonite Churches.

ture generations."

This summer, a virtual Vacation Bible Camp, organized in partnership with two other local churches and themed around our "Great Big Beautiful World," inspired children throughout the region to explore, celebrate and care for God's creation. And in the coming months, "Faithful Climate Conversations" will encourage members of Knox to put their faith into

action through conversations about climate justice.

"Faithful Climate Conversations" is a collection of resources from *For the Love of Creation*. Ecumenical in nature, this national initiative brings together faith-based organizations, including The Presbyterian Church in Canada, under a unified banner to raise awareness for, reflect on, act on and advocate for climate justice.

Whether churches have discussed climate change weekly for years, are just starting to grapple with the seriousness of the climate crisis and are looking for ways to respond or haven't ever thought about what it takes to diligently care for the earth, the time is ripe to gather with this resource in hand.

"By engaging in faithful climate conversations, we intend to provide a space for members of the Knox congregation to talk about our thoughts and feelings. We hope to create a community of listening and support as we discern what steps we can take to bring about change," said Femmy.

The Bible says that the "earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (1 Corinthians 10:26, NIV). The God who has saved us in love is "the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas" (Psalm 65:5). When we talk about, pray for or more faithfully moderate our actions on and towards this earth, we are living into that hope.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

Spiritual Companionships in Campbellville

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

In this moment in history, we are desperately trying to discern the future.

To be called to lead at any time can be a dangerous business. But to implement change and make progress in times like these—when most have one foot in the past and one in the air of the unknown—inevitably forces people within an organization to face deeper issues and potentially accept solutions that may require turning part of or the whole organization upside down.

While some have hurriedly scrambled to return to normal and make like nothing happened, the congregation at St. David's Presbyterian Church in Campbellville, Ont., has made a couple of decisions that will affect how we move into an unknown and uncertain future.

With the help of Anne Brockenshire and the folks at Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville, Ont., we have adopted their "Conduct Covenant," a wonderful document aimed at making

sure that everybody is on the same page to work together to create a joyful future for God's church, empowered by the Holy Spirit and deeply engaged in Christ's mission in the world.

The document speaks about practicing "spiritual companionship." Having everybody in our congregation be somewhat versed in the practice of spiritual companionship is the first piece of the "spiritual toolbox" we are building to equip us for this uncertain future.

To this end, we invited Ralph Benmergui to lead two 90-minute online sessions focused on creating and nurturing our own spiritual toolboxes. Ralph Benmergui is best known as a Canadian TV and radio personality. He is also an ordained Spiritual Director and hosts the podcast, "Not that kind of Rabbi."

Prayer, spending time in nature, practicing creativity and gratitude, exercising, journaling, giving and getting a hug, and, most importantly, listening and being listened to, are all important tools that a spiritual toolbox equips you with in order to foster

spiritual companionships.

Though I cannot yet report on the outcome, we have completed our first evening with Ralph. During the first session, we took time to speak about what is on our minds and discuss what to do in order to move forward in this time of "giant complexity" (to use the language of Paul Bunyan) we all have been called into.

We concluded that, first and foremost, we want to be spiritual companions. We want to go deeper and learn how to enable the spirit of love to move through us and free us of pomp and circumstance.

To this, Ralph made an interesting comment. He said "going deeper" is not so much a matter of climbing up the mountain of enlightenment as it is a matter of rappelling down the face of complexity to connect with one another.

So, we are going to learn how to rappel down the face of giant complexity together as spiritual companions, to get our feet on the ground again, and move joyfully forward into "giant uncertainty."



PHOTO CREDIT: DOUG ROOT

Buzz Cut for Vaccines in Cornwall



The Rev. Robert Adams—pre-buzz cut—with St. John's Clerk of Session, Cynthia Seguin. PHOTO CREDIT: WES LIBBEY

By Dan Plant, St. John's Presbyterian Church in Cornwall, Ont.

Why get a buzz cut for charity? Well, the Rev. Robert Adams, minister at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Cornwall, Ont., wanted to get a haircut just before the last lockdown went into effect, but unfortunately, his barber had already closed shop.

In frustration, Robert proclaimed, "Fine! I'll just let it grow out then!"

However, after further thought, he decided that he did want to do something about getting his hair cut, but that that something could be done in conjunction with an active effort to inspire his congregation and community to raise funds for the Love My Neighbour project—a campaign

inspired by Millennium Kids and organized in partnership with UNICEF Canada to ensure global vaccine equity.

So, Robert offered to go as far as getting a full buzz cut in exchange for donations to help the Love My Neighbour campaign achieve its goal of distributing COVID-19 vaccines quickly and equitably in low- and middle-income countries around the world, giving our whole global family access to life-saving prevention measures.

The Government of Canada's decision to further aid this campaign by matching dollar for dollar every donation made by an individual Canadian, up to a maximum of \$10 million, was just icing on the cake.

The "Buzz" happened after worship at St. John's Presbyterian Church on August 1. How does Robert like his haircut? Well, he was at one time a chaplain in the military and used to get a buzz cut for summer exercises with his units, so short hair is nothing new. Besides, as he said, "The difference between a bad haircut and a good haircut is only a matter of weeks."

As of August, just over \$3,000 has been raised by St. John's and the surrounding community. This means that over 120 two-dose vaccines will be handed out to people in developing countries.

Altogether, Love My Neighbour has raised over \$325,000 to help vaccinate 13,100 global neighbours lacking protection against COVID-19.



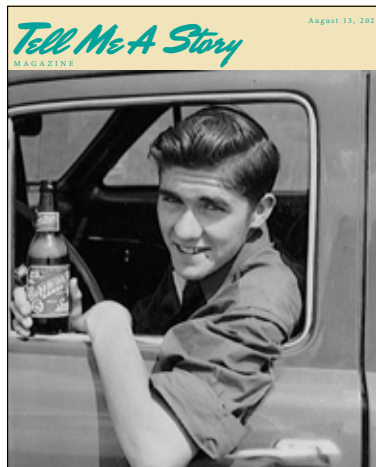
The Rev. Robert Adams post-cut. PHOTO CREDIT: STANDARD-FREEHOLDER / POSTMEDIA NETWORK.



St. John's Elder, Dr. Michele Alexis, putting the finishing touches on the Rev. Robert Adams's neckline. PHOTO CREDIT: WES LIBBEY

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

Telling Stories in Vernon



By the Rev. Dr. Teresa Charlton, Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C.

"Tell me a story, Grandma," is a familiar line between grandparents and grandchildren, sharing well-worn stories at bedtime or reminiscing when

feeling a little blue. Our scriptures are full of stories, time-honoured and treasured, as we pass them from one generation to the next.

During COVID-19, the city of Vernon in B.C., challenged local businesses and non-profits to find creative ways to bring joy and laughter to the seniors of our community, and those most confined due COVID-19 restrictions. Knox Presbyterian Church rose to that challenge, offering to publish a magazine filled with stories, pictures, recipes and memories, and distribute the publication to facilities, residences and the public at large, hoping to bring a smile to weary faces.

We received a grant from the North Okanagan Community Foundation in late 2020, which was augmented by a Canada Student Grant in the Spring of 2021. Over the late spring and early summer, a network of in-

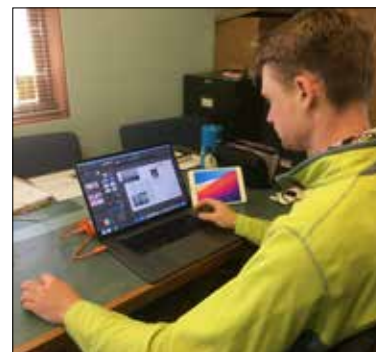
vitations was extended to the local Seniors' Centre, retirement homes, church families and through local news outlets to gather collections of biographies, anecdotes, poems and music. A summer student was also hired to lend their passion and skill in graphic design to the magazine.

While the spirit of Christian principles rings true throughout the pages, we carefully tried to ensure that the collection was well-rounded, intentionally focused more on pictures and less on words, and that the words were printed in a larger font size—to accommodate the needs of those we anticipated enjoying the magazine. By its completion, we had gathered together a wide variety of submissions that included stories about black bears eating warm pie from the windowsill, wedding mishaps, secret recipes for shortbread,



favourite hymns on grandmother's parlour piano, and tuba practice in the barnyard.

A few months later, we were ready to publish. A local printer completed the process and copies of the first issue of *Tell Me A Story* were distributed in late August. There is the possibility that this publication will become an annual summer project, as there will always be new stories to tell. Not only did Knox, Vernon, serve as a role model for a young adult student, we lifted and celebrated many



forgotten stories from the wisest of our community.

Grateful, Thankful, Blessed



By the Session of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Bowmanville, Ont., and the Rev. Anita Siposne Demeter

Welcome to the story of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Bowmanville, Ont. This story is all about our congregational journey of connecting, improving, sustaining, inventing, finding deeper faith and growing during this past year and a half of pandemic challenges.

We are a small congregation located in a town in the Municipality of Clarington, Ontario. The majority of our congregation are senior citizens. The congregation shares a strong Christian faith, as well as a sense of responsibility to serve our community and to care for one another.

In March 2020, as the province of Ontario declared its first lockdown with suspension of in-person religious services due to the pandemic, we quickly needed a strategy to:

- Keep the congregation informed about ongoing church activities, primarily the commencement of live streamed Sunday Worship Services.
- Promote and maintain supportive relationships between church members and adherents and the community.
- Decrease the sense of social isolation caused by pandemic restrictions.
- Preparation for the Annual General Meeting, including how to vote online.
- Advertising for church-based food drives and mission projects.
- Mental health resources.

Information regarding the church's growing electronic footprint is highlighted on our website at pccweb.ca/standrews-bowmanville, its Facebook page and YouTube channel.

The Letter to the Congregation also provides new content for the church's website. To date, there have been 20 editions of this congregational letter mailed or emailed between April 2020 and July 2021. Printed copies of the letter are mailed out to 43 households and electronic copies are emailed to 19 individuals.

Strategy #1: The Letter to the Congregation is a traditional newsletter. It quickly expanded into an eight-page letter, which is sent out once a month in print form or by email. Contents of the letter reflect the ongoing life and activities of the congregation, and typically include:

- Advertising of online events, such as our Sunday Worship Service, Hymn Sing, Breakout Rooms for socializing, weekly Prayer Meeting, Advent and Lenten Bible study groups and the Community Prayer Breakfast.
- Birthday wishes, prayer requests and thank-you recognitions.

Strategy #2: Once yearly, an Anniversary Letter is sent to people on the Congregational Roll who no longer attend St. Andrew's but are still interested in the activities of our church. The focus of the Anniversary Letter is to recap the church's yearly progress and programs. This has been a great way of keeping in touch with former active members.

Strategy #3: Individuals who join the live, online church services by telephone, can hear what is being said, speak with others, and participate in the Hymn Sing, the Worship Service and Breakout Rooms, but they cannot see the variety of images projected during the service. Our minister, the Rev. Anita Siposne Demeter creates and utilizes multiple forms of artwork and printed infor-



Nancy MacMaster (left) and Doreen Gilroy.

mation to support the message she shares with the online participants. Consequently, those joining by telephone have a less-than-optimal experience. They miss out on the visual information that enhances memory and provides a deeper experience of the message presented.

Our solution was to take screen captures during the live services and create a document that includes visual images and limited commentary from the service. The Word documents are then either mailed out or sent by email after each Sunday service. All these images keep congregants engaged, and recipients appreciate seeing images of other congregants during a time when we could not meet with others in person.

What have we learned from our experience at St. Andrew's? Quite a lot! We have received positive feedback from the congregation for the letters and screenshots. We feel that we have grown in resilience, learned to endure adversity and now have a "can do" attitude. Even though we are not in the church building we can still worship and work together through new and



The Rev. Anita Siposne Demeter.

old ways of connecting. These letters make congregants feel that we are all part of an ongoing, small but active and vibrant congregation. We have connected with each other in ways we did not expect to. Our friendships have grown deeper. We even took on a motto this past year of "We are grateful; We are thankful; We are blessed."

It is our hope that anyone reading this article might consider using one or more of the strategies we used to help build and sustain their own church in these difficult times. God bless!

HISTORY



The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.
 Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, Kenora, Ont.
 G-84-SC-87

The second Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, 1929–1970. PHOTO CREDIT: THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA ARCHIVES.

The 13-point Agreement of 1902 and Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School

By the Rev. Peter Bush, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fergus, Ont.

Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School opened in 1902 on School Point in Shoal Lake, the western part of The Lake of the Woods, in Ontario. CJ, as the school came to be known, was operated by the Women's Missionary Society of The Presbyterian Church in Canada; the schools' funding provided by the federal government. The federal government gave the crown land on which the school was built and paid for it to be built, along with a grant

to hire staff and house and feed students.

In opening a school in 1902 in North-western Ontario, the Presbyterian Church was entering a crowded school market, one in which Indigenous parents were knowledgeable about how the schools functioned. The leaders of the three First Nations bands closest to the school site entered negotiations with the principal regarding the terms by which the school would operate. The resulting 13-point agreement was endorsed by the church and the Indigenous leadership of the area.

Discussion of all the points is not possible in this short article, three points are highlighted.

Point 2 – "That this building shall be a school building."

It may seem odd that Indigenous leaders felt it was necessary to make this point. But by 1902 the Indigenous community was aware that some schools had become primarily instruments for religious conversion, with education in second place. Other schools had become workhouses with students as child labour on farms or in the schools.

Point 10 – "That if any of a family

is seriously ill (sick in bed), the child belonging to them shall be allowed to make a visit."

Children were allowed to leave the school to visit their sick parents. The meaning of "seriously ill" was defined to avoid confusion—sick in bed, unable to get out of bed. Indigenous people in Canada knew Indigenous parents had become sick and died while their children were at Residential School, and the children had not been given an opportunity to say goodbye. At times, children did not know their parents had died until they returned to their home communities after having been away at school for five or six years. (It was quite common for children to not return home for summer holidays.) The leaders negotiating the agreement wanted to ensure families were not denied the opportunity to say last words to one another. CJ school leaders would operate the school in such a way that children would be able to visit sick parents.

Point 13 – "That children shall pass a medical examination on entering the church but afterwards in the case of light sickness they shall be cared for at the school but in case of serious illness they shall be cared for at home or at school according to the wishes of the parents."

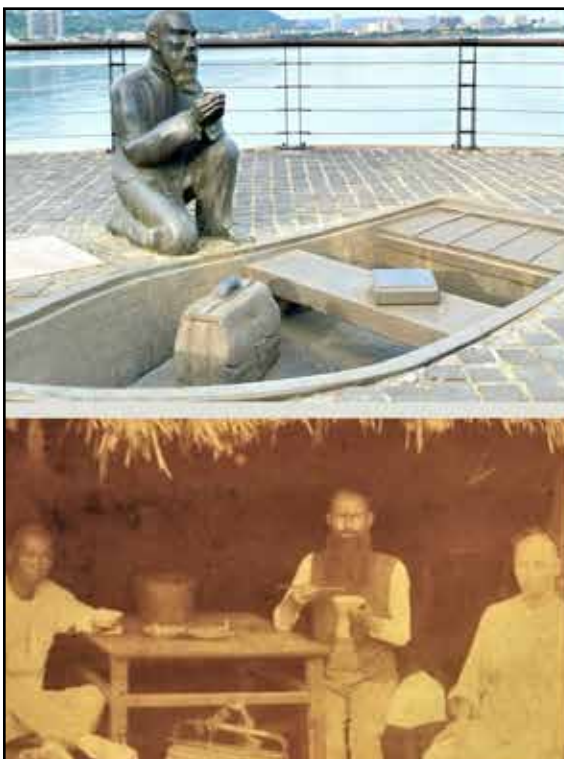
Parents and Indigenous leaders knew that children died in the schools, and that frequently parents were not informed of their child's illness and subsequent death. This final point in the agreement, established the right of parents to determine the care their child would receive when their child was sick in bed (the definition of *serious illness* as defined in point 10). The leadership of the school was aware that tuberculosis, in particular, but other

communicable diseases as well, could have devastating impacts in the close quarters of overcrowded Residential Schools. Therefore, students were to receive a clean bill of health before being admitted to the school. The school leaders were concerned that the building was to be a school, not a hospital for sick children. Even with healthy children entering the school, students got sick and died.

Points 10 and 13, along with other points in the agreement, were possible because the school, while not on Reserve land, was near the students' home communities, an easy canoe trip away. In 1929, CJ school was moved from Shoal Lake to a site on the edge of Kenora, and a number of the points in the agreement were no longer possible. The move, made without consultation with local Indigenous leaders or the parents of students, violated the terms of the agreement. Only minimal action was taken to ameliorate the violation.

Bishop Rouleau, Roman Catholic Bishop of Diocese of Churchill-Baie d'Hudson, in 1996 stated, "We sinned when we thought we could be better parents to you than your parents were." In the 13-point agreement, parents sought to assert their rights as parents in caring for their children, exercising agency. But the dominant culture, including both government and church, did not believe Indigenous parents could be good parents. The schools became contexts in which the Canadian social values of the day were taught.

In light of the events of 2021, the 13-point agreement feels shockingly prophetic as children's graves are known to be at both sites of CJ school.



MACKAY 150 COMMEMORATIVE CALENDAR

CANADIAN MACKAY COMMITTEE 2022

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of George Leslie Mackay's arrival in Tamsui on March 9, 1872, and the beginning of Canada's engagement with Asia, the Canadian Mackay Committee offers a English-Chinese wall calendar with historic and contemporary pictures from Taiwan and Canada, plus informative text and dates.

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PLANNED GIVING

Sage Advice about Giving Securities

by Jim MacDonald and Karen Plater,
Stewardship & Planned Giving

In 2006, the Federal Government eliminated capital gains taxes on charitable gifts of publicly traded securities given as a gift-in-kind to charities. This means that when securities are transferred to a charity, the donor receives a charitable gift tax receipt and they don't pay the capital gains tax on its appreciated value. In 2005, \$252,240 worth of stocks were donated to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This tripled the year after the tax break and in 2020—a challenging financial year—over \$1.3 million was given.

Giving securities has become a popular way for people to support capital campaigns and special projects and even give their regular offering to the church. The majority (70–80%) of shares received by the PCC are designated to congregations, while the rest support Presbyterian ministries, including Presbyterians Sharing, PWS&D, Indigenous ministries and camps.

Lloyd and Lynda Skeoch, members of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., kindly shared their experience to explain the popularity of giving shares.

Lloyd is an accountant and church treasurer, while Lynda is a customer service executive and an active participant in the congregation. Now retired, when they worked for large companies, Lloyd and Lynda each participated in stock purchase and stock option plans. After many years of remarkable growth, the value of the stocks had stabilized and so they decided to make a gift of the stock, since there was no reason to wait for their shares to further increase in value. They felt that they understood their financial situation enough to afford the loss of some dividend income and the downsizing of their stock portfolio. Lloyd explained, "We'd been saving these for a rainy day, but it's not going

to rain that bad; so, it was time to let some of them loose. We can live with a smaller safety net."

Lloyd crunched the numbers. With significant capital gains on his shares, he estimated that he'd have to donate an additional 24% to give the same amount in cash as he was able to give by transferring the securities to the church. Lynda's securities had less capital gains than Lloyd's, so the benefits were a little smaller, but she was still able to give 14% more to the church than she would have given if she'd sold the stock and given the cash.

Lloyd said, "It just makes sense to make the most effective use of your money that you can. If I was to die today, our estate would have a big tax

bill, so it's also a way of using those future taxable dollars to make a gift to the church now and avoid the tax later on."

Giving shares through the PCC is easy. At your direction, your broker electronically transfers your securities to the PCC's brokerage, which sells the stock soon after receiving the transfer. You will receive a tax receipt for the full market value of the security on the day it is given and the proceeds of the sale (reflecting any change in value from the transfer and sale, minus any broker fees) will go to the PCC congregation, program or ministry you designate. While it can take a little longer than a cash gift, the benefits are great.

By sharing their story, Lloyd and

Line	Description	Formula	Scenario A: Sells shares, donates the proceeds	Scenario B: Donates shares as a gift-in-kind
1	Value of the shares		\$5,000	\$5,000
2	Capital gain of shares	#1 minus original investment	\$3,000	\$3,000
3	Capital gain tax	#2 Capital gain x 50% x 46%	\$690	Not applicable
4	Value of Gift (& tax receipt)	#1 minus #3	\$4,310	\$5,000
5	Income tax credit	#4 x 46%*	\$1,983	\$2,300
6	Cost to make the gift	#1 minus #5	\$3,017	\$2,700

Note: This example assumes that the donor has to pay income taxes and can use the advantage of the income tax credit generated by the gift. *Marginal tax rates vary according to income levels and provincial tax rates. The Presbyterian Church in Canada recommends that donors seek professional advice to ensure that gifts are tailored to their circumstances.

It Costs Less to Give More

By giving securities directly, Ms. Smith discovered it costs less to give more.

Ms. Smith's marginal tax rate is 46%. She invested \$2,000 in stocks and the shares are now worth \$5,000 (line 1).

In scenario A, Ms. Smith sells the shares, reserves the amount to pay the capital gains tax (line 3) and donates the remaining cash (line 4) to her congregation. However, in scenario B, because she doesn't have to pay any capital gains tax, she transfers the full \$5,000 of shares to the church. This means she receives a larger tax receipt, so she also saves more on her income taxes (line 5).

When Ms. Smith sells the shares and gives the cash, the gift costs her \$3,017 after taxes. But when she gives the shares as a gift-in-kind, it only costs her \$2,700 after taxes. It costs less (line 6) to give more (line 4)!

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

Romans 12:6–8 (NIV)

Linda are living out the call in Romans 12:8 by leading others. Like many donors we talk to, they give out of love and because they want to participate in God's mission—not because of the tax breaks. What excites them about tax breaks is that it

allows them to give more than they thought.

You can donate securities as a gift-in-kind to The Presbyterian Church in Canada for any PCC congregation or ministry. Learn more at presbyterian.ca/securities.

Out here? The search for God in cosmology.

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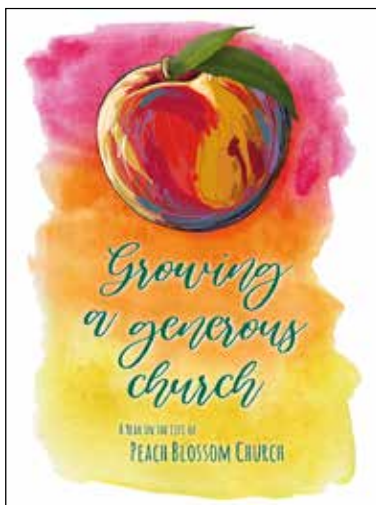
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 The Presbyterian Church in Canada

BOOK REVIEWS

Let's Talk About Money



By Karen Plater, Associate Secretary,
Stewardship and Planned Giving

If your congregation finds it challenging to ask people to give or to talk about finances, you're not alone. In a survey on stewardship recently conducted by the PCC, out of 334 congregations who replied, 79% said they don't have an intentional program to encourage generous giving, while 10% said they never talk about money and 40% have never had a sermon on stewardship.

Lori Guenther Reesor would like to change that.

In June, Lori joined Presbyterians for an online webinar to discuss ways for people to encourage generosity in their congregation. She introduced ideas from her new book *Growing a Generous Church*. Written to help congregations who have never been intentional about talking about money, Lori's book focuses on the financial aspects of generosity because she feels that churches particularly "need help getting past the fear factor in talking about finances."

While doing doctoral research on giving, Lori was surprised to discover that even as people who go to church are some of the most generous people in Canada, as many as 40% of Canadian church attendees do not donate to their congregation. "You know who is never surprised by that statistic?" Lori said in the webinar. "Church treasurers."

Lori sees generosity as a spiritual discipline like prayer, which can be taught and nurtured and discussed. "Just because we pray doesn't mean there isn't more we can learn about praying," she explained. Even generous people and good financial managers can continually learn about generosity. Furthermore, at different stages of life, people can



Lori Guenther Reesor.

hear things in new ways. And, when someone new comes to the church, we shouldn't assume that they know what God teaches about generous giving, any more than they know what God teaches about prayer or forgiveness or love.

So, Lori created Peach Blossom Church, a fictional congregation based on the real-life stories she collected by talking with people in church basements across Canada. The book walks the reader through a year in the life of Peach Blossom as members explore how to grow in generosity and create a place where people feel safe to talk about all aspects of money—their troubles and joys, what to do with the money they keep and how to give money away. It reads like a novel, with the addition of pictures and discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

Growing a Generous Church explores money from a variety of perspectives, sharing stories of people from diverse backgrounds and vary-

ing life stages. The people at Peach Blossom talk about issues like why they give, the role of gratitude, how to say thank you, tithing and how to approach bequests. They tackle some controversial topics, like whether the minister should know what people give. Their explorations and stories contain material for sermons, discussion topics and practical ideas, like how to present a congregational budget.

Through the book, *Peach Blossom* transforms from a congregation that only talks about money when they don't have much of it into one that integrates money topics into Bible studies, sermons and children's stories. Their conversation changes to focus on gratitude rather than worry. Expressing gratitude, Lori finds, is at the core of becoming generous people.

When asked if there is one thing a congregation can do to increase generosity, Lori replied that it would be to share stories: stories about why people give and stories about how God is transforming gifts into mission. "Stories have the power to transform," Lori said.

Nurturing a culture of generosity doesn't have to be complicated. An intentional program on generosity can be anything that helps people to follow Jesus' teachings on how to effectively practice stewardship.

If you would like to do one thing this year to help your congregation learn more, *Growing a Generous Church* would make a great selection

for a church book club! There is a discount for 10+ books to encourage group study.

You could also try the United Church of Canada's "Called to be Church" program to build a Stewardship Sunday service, integrate stewardship ideas into your regular services, or run a stewardship campaign. This year's theme explores the connection between discipleship and stewardship.

Sanctified Art, a collective of PC(USA) ministers bringing scriptures to life through the arts, has a four-week stewardship series called "Our Money Story," which helps people look at the role of money on their spiritual journey. (The series can be purchased, but there is tiered pricing to make the resources accessible to congregations of all sizes.)

More Information

Growing a Generous Church leadership webinar: presbyterian.ca/webinars (Stewardship & Planned Giving section)

Growing a Generous Church book: lgreesor.com or commonword.ca

"Called to be Church" program: united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/stewardship/called-be-church-journey

"Our Money Story": sanctifiedart.org/our-money-story-stewardship-bundle

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Calgary, St. Andrew's (full-time associate minister of Growth & Care) – Alberta & the Northwest

Edmonton, Dayspring (full-time minister) – 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 minister) – British Columbia

Amherstview, Trinity (60%-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Bradford West Gwillimbury, St. John's (full-time Associate Minister for Children and Families) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Elmira, Gale (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

North York, University (part-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Orillia, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Toronto, Formosan (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Toronto, Knox (full-time senior minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Toronto, Mimico (75%-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Toronto, Rosedale (full-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 (full-time 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 (full-time 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

DEATH NOTICES

Read all full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

The Rev. Dr. Cedric Pettigrew
Ottawa, Ont.
Deceased July 17, 2021

The Rev. Richard J. Gillanders
Winnipeg, Man.
Deceased July 17, 2021

The Rev. Ronald Mahabir
Chateaugay, Que.
Deceased July 11, 2021

The Rev. Dianne Ollerenshaw
Calgary, Alta.
Deceased July 1, 2021

The Rev. Dr. Robert Spencer
Guelph, Ont.
Deceased June 28, 2021

Nan Budding
Brampton, Ont.
Deceased June 5, 2021

The Rev. Larry Hankinson
Lethbridge, Alta.
Deceased May 1, 2021

Kenneth McKellar Keith
London, Ont.
Deceased March 16, 2021

Dundas, West Flamboro (80%-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

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

London, Oakridge (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

London, Trinity (half-time stated supply) – Southwestern Ontario

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

Niagara Falls, Chippawa (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

North Yarmouth, St. James (part-time or student minister) – Southwestern Ontario

Presbytery of London, General Presbyter (half-time 3-year contract) – Southwestern Ontario

Thornbury, St. Paul's (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

Thorold, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

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

REFLECTIONS

Responding to the Remits



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

Having lived for over 80 years now, it has been interesting to compare some of the decisions our church has made in response to the big issues it faced within that time period. One of these challenging movements took place in 1966, when the church agreed to ordain women. Another

similarly controversial decision was voted on more recently, during the last General Assembly—the agreement to ordain LGBTQI people, married or single.

Both of these movements have at least one thing in common: the final decisions were made only after years of multiple committee reports and recommendations, many studies and discussions, and much prayer throughout the church.

But in at least one respect the decisions bear a distinct difference. In 1966, the agreement to ordain women seemed to be generally accepted by the whole church, although a significant sector of the church remained vehemently opposed. However, a few years after that decision, a young man appeared before the Presbytery of East Toronto seeking ordination. In every respect he seemed eminently suited for ministry, but during his examination he announced not only was he against the ordination of women but that he would not participate in their ordination. The presbytery decided to set aside an evening to decide whether or not his ordination should proceed. Those who supported the young man argued that in this matter the church should exercise freedom of conscience and action. However, the presbytery decided they could not ordain him. That decision was appealed to the synod. It was then appealed to the General Assembly. The Assembly, in their report, ordered the presbytery to ordain this young man, but declared that he should be the last person ordained who held these views. Ordaining women was so important that freedom of conscience

and action could not be allowed.

In this regard, the recent decision regarding LGBTQI people is in marked contrast to the 1966 ruling. Here, the church went to great lengths to ensure that those who opposed this action were accommodated within the church. Presbyterian ministers could not only exercise freedom of conscience in this matter but could exercise freedom of action with regard to LGBTQI people.

This begs the question as to what had happened in the church between 1966 and 2021 to cause this change in attitude. Perhaps sixty years ago the church had become more generous and accepting of differing views in its ministry and constituency? Does today's decision reflect that the LGBTQI candidates would somehow be inferior ministers to ordained women in the church? Or did the free-will option enacted by the church in this instance arise more out of fear than anything else—fear that a denomination already statistically weakened could face a major disruption (i.e., mass exodus) that might mean the end of The Presbyterian Church in Canada as a denomination? That, I suspect, was the major motivation around attempts of

accommodation over this decision. It in turn begs the question as to whether making decisions out of fear is ever justified by a church body in the short or long term.

In 1991, I was the editor of the *Presbyterian Record* magazine and preparing to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women. In preparing for this issue, I attempted to contact that significant group of commissioners at the 1966 Assembly who had recorded their vote against the decision to ordain women. Of course, by then some had died. Others did not respond, I suspect, because they were now embarrassed that they had once voted against the ordination of women. But the majority replied that they had changed their minds and could no longer maintain their previous views in the light of the effective ministry of ordained women they had experienced.

Perhaps, the same evolution will take place with LGBTQI candidates as with the ordination of heterosexual women, if the Presbyterian Church is granted the time. Meanwhile, LGBTQI people will be ordained to minister in a denomination that does not fully recognize nor accept them.

Searching for Authority in Christianity

By David W. T. Brattston,
Lunenburg, N.S.

There is an abundance of Christian leaders and denominations that claim to be heaven's best spokesperson and representative of the church most approved by God. Some claim authority by having been in direct conversation with God as a prophet, or as having restored pure original Christianity in our day from their superior interpretation of the Bible, or by possessing new holy books, or tracing lines of succession back to the Twelve Apostles, or declaring more faithful adherence to statements of faith written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Which one can we accept, from an objective and neutral point of view, as a true

church gifted with true authority?

Unfortunately, there is no universally accepted collection of religious truths or method of finding it. There are too many ways of designating one institution or person as the paramount font of true doctrine and practice. There are at least nine grounds for asserting authority: charismatic leaders, prophets, personal experience with the divine, rational thinking, correct interpretation of the scriptures, conscience, appointment by person previously in authority, election by the laity, long history of the same doctrine and practice, adopting the church of one's family and neighbours for the sake of peace and fitting in (community standards), and varying combinations of them. How can



an individual Christian decide which is the most important consideration? There is no general rule, and Christianity has no supreme court to decide which is more important than another. Even something as simple and direct as tracing authority through lines of succession of bishops is not helpful, for some denominations reject those of some others as invalid.

Even more questions arise: Can authority be delegated? Can authority be limited? How can authority

be gained? Can authority be lost? Can church authority be divided or shared, as in a secular federal union? How can authority be increased? Who can punish those who abuse their authority? Who today possesses the powers of Jesus that he did not specifically grant to the apostles? These are all difficult questions, and well beyond simple answers. Come to think of it, it is the answers to these questions, each in a different way, that accounts for the existence of thirty thousand Christian denomi-

nations, each claiming to possess the best and highest truth.

Thus, there is not only no universal agreement on the highest and best authority in Christianity, but also there is no rule for singling one out as acceptable to all. This accounts for the phenomenon where one person researches the teachings of many denominations and chooses a particular one as the only true or truest, while another seeker may undergo the same study and joins a completely different denomination.

Instead of searching for a neutral and uncluttered authority that might never be found, a more practical approach is to accept the guidance of a church near enough to your home that you can attend and participate in readily; one that provides geographical closeness, opportunities to help others, services for your spiritual and moral growth, regular worship services, Sunday School and other Christian training, and a depth of meaning you find worthwhile in its particular worship format (liturgy). These are the circumstances in which you live and where you need to search for spiritual and moral guidance, rather than seeking it in the doctrines and claims of thirty thousand Christian denominations.

