



Jesus and the Old Testament

By the Rev. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, retired (2021) Professor of Hebrew Bible and Dean at Vancouver School of Theology. She continues to be active in preaching, teaching and ministry, including via her home congregation of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Burnaby and New Westminster, B.C.

When I am out and about, teaching and preaching in congregations, I'm often asked: What does the Old Testament have to do with our Christian faith? It's so long and difficult, do we really need it? Isn't the New Testament enough for our faith in Jesus?

A short answer, which I sometimes use, is that we wouldn't be here as Christians if it weren't for the Old Testament. A more thoughtful answer takes into account what the New Testament witness says about the topic.

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Believers in the Early Church asked, "What does it mean to say, 'Jesus is Lord'?" For the disciples and early believers, all of whom were Jewish, answers to their questions came from the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians call the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the believers discovered the laws, stories, psalms and prophecies Jesus himself had known as scripture and quoted during his ministry. There, they found the rich heritage that allowed them to understand and express their beliefs about the astounding events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

The Hebrew Scriptures were the source of life and hope for God's people, helping them to survive long centuries of exile and oppression. In the centuries of Persian, Greek and Roman domination (about 540 BCE onwards), the Jews were oppressed in Judah and scattered throughout the Near East. The scriptures became central to Jewish identity as they



were edited, collected and canonized over the years. Judaism was a complex religion as various groups sought to be faithful to their tradition in the face of social disruption and political oppression. The scriptures and their interpretation were topics of debate and discussion as rabbis, lawyers, scribes, sects, sages and common people sought to understand how to keep their identity as God's people intact.

While the Hebrew canon was probably not yet closed in Jesus' day, the scriptures he knew certainly consisted of:

the Law, the five books of Moses (the Torah), Genesis through Deuteronomy;

the Prophets, the "Former Prophets" or the historical books, like Joshua through II Kings, and the "Latter Prophets" or prophetic books, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and some portion of the 12 minor prophets;

the Writings, the Psalms, wisdom books like Proverbs and

Job, and other texts.

In the complex mix of Greek culture, Roman domination and Jewish faith in the first century CE, the New Testament writings show Jesus, the disciples and the Early Church joining in the swirling debates about "the law and the prophets." Jesus addressed these questions from the standpoint of one who announced and brought a new revelation—the Kingdom of God. The Early Church used the Hebrew Scriptures to understand and interpret who Jesus was and what his ministry, death and resurrection meant for them.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commented on the relationship between the scriptures and the Kingdom of God. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). The common witness of the New Testament is that Jesus fulfilled the true meaning of the scriptures. Each writer

of the gospels and the other New Testament books put their own emphasis on this witness. But all expressed what the proclamation "Jesus is Lord" meant by reference to the Hebrew Scriptures.

The gospels draw on the Hebrew Scriptures to explore two key topics: who Jesus is in God's plan of salvation and what his ministry and preaching mean for life in the Kingdom.

Jesus in God's plan of salvation

One way to trace the scriptural roots of the gospels concerning who Jesus is, is to look at the names and titles used to describe him. For example, at Jesus' trial before the high priest:

Again, the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven'" (Mark 14:61–62).

Here, the gospel contains three titles for Jesus, all drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures. The high priest uses "Messiah" or "Anointed One" (see Psalms 2:2, 18:50 and 89:20) and "Son of the Blessed One" or "Son of God" (see Psalm 2:7). Jesus frames his identity as the "Son of Man" using Daniel:

As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him (Daniel 7:13–14).

The familiar story of Palm Sunday, when Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, contains another scriptural witness that Jesus is the long-expected king of David's royal line:

As [Jesus] rode along [on the colt], people spread their cloaks on the road.... The disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power they had witnessed, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" (Luke 19:36–38)

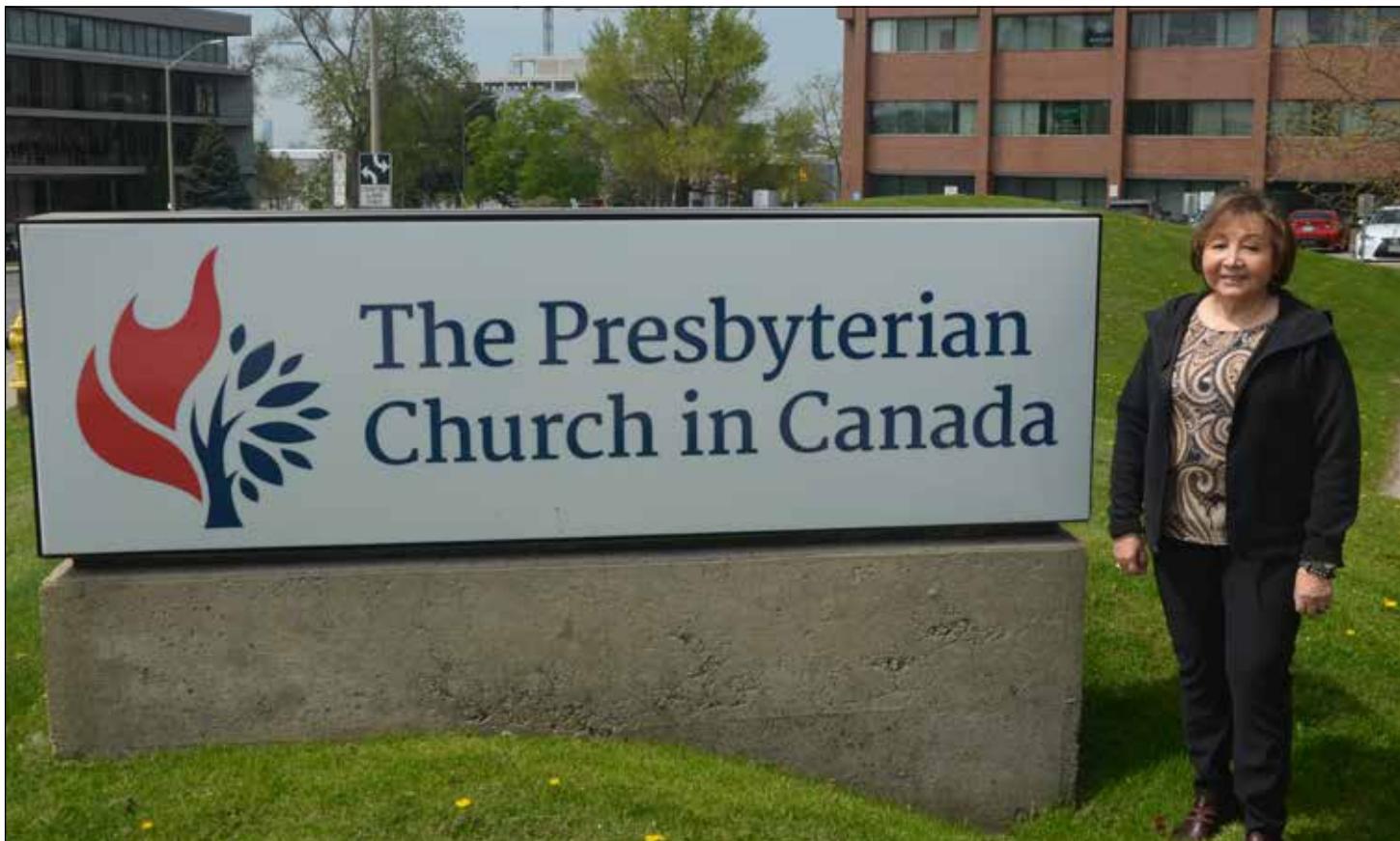
Jesus' actions, by entering Jerusalem, demonstrated to his followers the fulfillment of Zechariah's words: "Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (9:9). The gospel writer Luke made this royal identity explicit at the beginning of his book when he reported the angel Gabriel's words to Mary:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of

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FOCUS ON THE MODERATOR

The Rev. Mary Fontaine, Moderator of the 2023 General Assembly



The Rev. Mary Fontaine, Moderator of the 2023 General Assembly.

On June 4, 2023, the Rev. Mary Fontaine, founding director of Hummingbird Ministries, was installed as Moderator of the 2023 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Mary Fontaine is Nēhiyaw (Cree) from Mistawasis Nēhiyawak, Saskatchewan, where she grew up attending Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church with her family. Mary has a B.A. in Native Studies from the University of Alberta (1995) and an M.Div. from the Vancouver School of Theology (2003). She was on the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (2010–2017). She convenes the National Indigenous Ministries Council of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and serves on the Special Committee re. Petitions 1 and 2, 2021.

Mary discerns the Spirit at work in Indigenous wisdom and spirituality and sees how this can enhance the church she

loves, in various ways, including relationship-building and care of the earth. She trusts in the Indigenous vision (similar to that of Revelation) that one day the nations will gather beneath the tree of peace and learn to love and live in harmony with one another.

An interview was held with Mary during the moderator nomination process. Below are her answers to the questions presented.

What verses of scripture do you return to and find especially formative and sustaining?

Jeremiah 31:31–34, Psalm 23, Philippians 4:6–7, Luke 10:27 and Matthew 7:16.

What is your image and vision of the church at its best?

The church is welcoming and open to new people regardless of race, background or identity. Together we worship and honour God in ways that are meaningful

to each of us. We worship everywhere in what we do, how we live and treat one another, not only during Sunday worship. We've learned to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, our minds, our souls, and our neighbour as ourselves, by caring for and helping one another. The church is buzzing with life everywhere, not only the church, but it has also grown outside its buildings. And it includes children and youth. Relationships are healthy and open between generations. Grandchildren are close with grandparents.

What would you say is the core calling of the church in Canada today?

The core calling of the church is to set the example of emotional and spiritual maturity by demonstrating that we are not all about material wealth but the spiritual abundance demonstrated by how closely we follow the path created

by the One who died that we may live. To love justice by heeding the cries of the world and to be a friend; not judging or blaming but loving and caring for even those who are different.

What area of public life do you believe the PCC should be more involved in than it currently is?

The church needs to find ways of connecting with the people in its immediate vicinity and work ecumenically and with other faith groups, where possible. When I was a student minister at Mistawasis Presbyterian Church, one of my sisters said, "Now don't stick by yourself at the church, be part of our community. Come to the school, come to community events, be with us." I followed that advice by fundraising with the children and youth so they could attend summer camps and social outings during the winter. Fundraising barbecues outside

the Band office reached the staff who worked there. People got their bottles ready for our bottle drives. The women gathered at the church to make crafts to auction off at the school's Christmas pageant. We had special winter events, like sledding on Sunday afternoons, roasting hot dogs and sipping hot chocolate. This connection to the community motivated people to volunteer when we needed help for church programs and we reached youth through our summer and winter outings and many children attended Vacation Bible School.

Congregations need to find new ways of talking about our faith in Jesus Christ by connecting with the people in our neighbourhoods. An outreach community group could be organized to visit and invite people to special events at the church, and result in a sense of warmth and community toward the church.

Often people need a safe place to go to and to meet new friends. The church's work in overcoming the saga of the residential school system may lead to the creation of a new image of the church, and unanticipated benefits and growth.

One way to reimagine the church is to think of it as part of a larger circle of life—one that is inclusive, yet with a unique and valued identity. One that helps to set a standard of listening and respecting the gifts that God has distributed among the nations of the world. The circle represents Indigenous theological concepts like harmonious respectful relationships, strong community, multiple connections and equal value among the nations and life-forms of God's creation.

The PCC could draw on the wisdom of Indigenous Elders, through its eight Indigenous ministries, for a deeper understanding of Indigenous theol-

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Hummingbird Ministries is an Indigenous-led ministry of the Presbytery of Westminster. The main goals of the organization are to reclaim the sacredness of Indigenous people and the beauty of Indigenous culture, spirituality, worldview and the sacred identity as God's people through faith circles, arts and projects. Hummingbird Ministries promotes awareness and Indigenous relationships with churches, schools and others through dance, drama and music performances, events, presentations and preaching.

CORRECTION NOTICE



Amy Campbell in Ottawa, May 1992.



In the Spring 2023 edition of the *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper, the article titled “Recognizing Capt. Bonnie Mason,” (page 14) incorrectly stated that Bonnie was the first female military chaplain for the PCC. That honour actually belongs to Navy Lt. (ret’d) Amethyst (Amy) E. H. Campbell, who currently resides in Esquimalt (Victoria) B.C.

Here is a bit more information about Amy’s military career, in her own words.

I joined the military in 1986 while at Vancouver School of Theology (VST) through the Reserve Entry Scheme Officer (RESO) Chaplain program. Upon ordination in 1989, I became the Chaplain at HMCS DISCOVERY, Vancouver’s Naval Reserve Division. During that period, I served five summers as chaplain at Cadet Camps in Cornwallis, N.S., Whitehorse, Y.T., and Banff, Alta. I trans-

ferred to the Regular Force Chaplaincy in 1996 and was posted to CFB Esquimalt and the Pacific Fleet. I sailed on deployments up and down the west coast from San Diego to Alaska as well as to an international exercise off Hawaii and a tour in the Northern Arabian Gulf. In 2000, I moved from chaplaincy to training development and rounded out my career with postings to Borden,

Ont., Halifax, N.S., and Winnipeg, Man., before retiring back to Esquimalt.

In the photo above, Amy is making a pastoral visit via jackstay transfer from one ship to another during the RIMPAC exercise off Hawaii in 1998. On Sunday mornings, she would be flown from ship to ship for services via a helicopter, dubbed the “Holy Helo.”

Thank you for your service, Amy!

The PCC needs to find ways to connect

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ogy gained through seeing God’s wisdom reflected in creation. There are also some valuable books written by non-Indigenous people who have lived and walked with Indigenous people in various ways. The concept of “everything we do is a prayer” was demonstrated in a course at VST about prayer, delivered by West Coast Salish Elders who demonstrated how they built their canoes with prayer. A Salish woman gave a weaving workshop for Hummingbird and described how weaving was a prayer.

Individual Presbyterians could learn and set an example for other Presbyterians by attending public Indigenous events and programs.

What concern of the church’s internal life and ministry should be a greater part of the PCC’s focus?

The PCC needs to find ways to connect with the younger generations for the future life of the church. And to reach other cultures, we need to change the lan-

guage of church somehow.

One of the goals of the Strategic Plan is to pursue spiritual renewal and faith formation as the basis for transformation within congregations.

What does pursuing spiritual renewal look like for you personally and what could it look like for the denomination corporately?

I think the church and theological schools should do more work on the theology of the Holy Spirit—to practice discerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit in ourselves and in the church through the Prayer Elders (male and female) and the minister. And to also listen to what the Spirit is saying through the men, the women, the children and youth. Where is the balance between the mind and the heart? The mind, body, soul and spirit are all important parts of the human being but in the church, our custom is to rely on what is written in scriptures. Sometimes we need wisdom, kindness, compassion and humour more than the “blue book” (i.e., the Book of Forms) in

given situations, especially since the greatest commandment is to love others as ourselves. The church could benefit by regular Prayer Circles (groups). And the use of song, dance and drama are powerful ways of reaching hearts across differences. These gifts allow for joyful as well as solemn worship.

Where do you see signs of hope for the world and the church?

That the PCC has taken many good steps toward healing and reconciliation with Indigenous people. It has repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, responded to the final report of the MMIWG [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls], confessed to its part in the residential school system and supports eight Indigenous ministries in its denomination. This is hopeful because it demonstrates love and acceptance of Indigenous people and our languages and cultures. It demonstrates the church’s openness to being guided by the Spirit as well as to traditional interpreta-

tions of scripture. It is a hopeful sign that the church is engaging in conversations about climate change because it shows that the church is thinking about good stewardship of the earth. The church continues to be a source of hope for eternal life through the sacrificial love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is your prayer for the church?

My prayer is that our church will grow in Spirit, in numbers and especially in love. That our church will thrive in the midst of society as a place of healing and reconciliation, not only with Indigenous people but with God our Creator, with one another as human beings and with the Earth our Mother and her many gifts. I pray that as an entity of the human race, the church, nearing that time and place when we can gather beneath that great tree of peace, where we bury our weapons against each other, will have finally learned how to love and live peacefully with one another.



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Moderator of the General Assembly:

The Rev. Mary Fontaine

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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Jesus' kingship took on a more poignant meaning

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his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:32–33).

However, Jesus' kingship took on a more poignant meaning when the gospel writers used another image from the Hebrew Scriptures to express their faith about who Jesus is. Recalling Isaiah's image of the "suffering servant" (Chapter 53), Jesus' suffering and death made atonement for human sin within God's plan of saving grace. And on the cross, Jesus cries out the deepest lament of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Many such times throughout the gospel, Matthew assured his readers that Jesus' life and death fulfill the scriptures. At the point of his arrest, Jesus himself proclaims, "But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled" (Matthew 26:56).

Life in the Kingdom

The Early Church confessed Jesus as Lord and Saviour. They also remembered his teaching and preaching about how to live as God's redeemed people. As the gospel writers told the good news, they recalled that Jesus spoke of the continuing importance of adhering to "the law and the prophets" to guide how one lives. Jesus preached and demonstrated that the scriptures had been fulfilled and given their deepest meaning in the Kingdom of God. As the law and the prophets had taught, a life lived in response to God's saving grace must be expressed in ways that embody God's compassion, righteousness and will for humanity.

Regarding the Sabbath command, for example, Jesus demonstrated God's righteousness based in a scriptural command.



He confronted the arrogance and authoritarianism of those who had a lot to lose in terms of the world's power, privilege and status.

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then, there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." But the leader of the synagogue [was] indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath. But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman...be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" (Luke 13:10–17, excerpts)

The interpretation of the Sabbath commandment was an issue in Jewish communities of Jesus' day because all Jews understood the Sabbath to be one of the most important marks of their

faith. During his ministry, Jesus acted and healed on the Sabbath, showing how compassion and life-giving actions fulfill the true, liberating meaning of the Sabbath command. While ordinary Jews might have accepted Jesus' words, his actions challenged Jewish interpreters and leaders who placed a higher value on their authority over the law than on the law's expression of God's gracious will.

Jesus insisted a true fulfillment of the commandments of the Hebrew Scriptures expressed God's righteousness—a righteousness that went beyond the words of the law to the inner meaning of the law. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave a series of illustrations that all started with "You have heard that it was said" and continued with his reinterpretation of a commandment.

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother

or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire (Matthew 5: 21–22). You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also (Matthew 5: 38–39).

In dramatic language, Jesus conveyed the Kingdom's demands for righteousness. He deepened the commandments as he communicated the radical demands of the Kingdom to live according to God's will. Jesus also used the Hebrew Scriptures to summarize God's righteousness for all who would be his followers. In so doing, he extended the community boundaries of God's people.

One of the scribes came near and asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" (Mark 12:28–31).

Jesus' response illustrated a significant passage from Deuteronomy (6:4–5) and a verse from Leviticus (19:18). It summarized the law in a way that the rabbis and Jews of his day would have understood. However, in Luke's version of the Great Commandment (10:25–37), Jesus was asked a further question: "Who is my neighbour?" To whom is God's love to be extended? In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus showed that the righteousness God's people are to live out

does not stop at the convenient boundaries of our own "group."

Jesus' teaching, preaching, acts of healing and confrontations all demonstrated that God's righteousness, as it had first been expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures, would be fulfilled and deepened in the Kingdom. Sometimes, he confronted people, especially the powerful who felt secure in their position of wealth, with their arrogance and hypocrisy. Always, he demonstrated the radical depth of commitment to God and God alone that the Kingdom demanded.

The Early Church professed that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the hopes and prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures. They found in those scriptures the traditions and texts that helped them express their faith in who Jesus was and what the Kingdom he preached on required of his followers. And they confessed that God had brought those scriptures to full realization in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.

The Old Testament has everything to do with the Christian faith! The revelation of God's will and righteousness; the sure and unbreakable promises to God's people; the history, poetry, prophecies and wisdom concerning God's grace, justice and steadfast love—all of this is the rich heritage and tradition of the Old Testament. Jesus depended on the Old Testament because it was the faith of his ancestors, the root of his identity and the source of his teachings. Those who confess Christ are the heirs of the living heritage of the Old Testament. We continue to depend on it to give us our roots, to ground our identity as God's people, and to help us express our faith in Jesus.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



This image of the Rev. Dr. J.A. and Marjorie MacInnis was taken in London, England, as they were leaving for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, June 2, 1953, where they were representing The Presbyterian Church in Canada. PHOTO CREDIT: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ARCHIVES

Presbyterian Witness at the Queen's Coronation in 1953

Every year the Assembly sends loyal addresses to the Prime Minister, the Assembly of First Nations, and this year, for the first time, a loyal address was sent to King Charles III. The coronation for Charles took place on May 6, 2023. The following is a memory from 1953.

The Rev. Dr. John A. MacIn-

nis (1886–1964) was born on a farm in Mira, Cape Breton. Before ordination, he served in the Canadian military service in Britain and France during World War I. He held degrees in theology from Queen's University in Kingston and Union in New York.

John first served a congregation in Port Alice on Vancouver Island, B.C., before being called

to be the assistant minister at First Presbyterian Church in Edmonton, Alta. While in Edmonton, he married Marjorie McQueen, who was the daughter of the senior minister at First Presbyterian Church. After leaving Edmonton, John and Marjorie went on to serve congregations in New Liskeard (now City of Temiskaming Shores) and Orillia

in Ontario.

In recognition of John's vigorous, dedicated ministry and wise leadership, Knox College honoured him with the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1947. In 1952, he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly and thus represented the church at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953.

2023 General Assembly: Narratives of Reflection and Hope

By Callie Long, Karen Plater
and Allyson Carr

Meeting in Halifax from June 4–7, the 2023 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada not only celebrated the first in-person meeting since 2019 but also the election of the Rev. Mary Fontaine, the denomination's first Indigenous Moderator. From the opening worship, a recurring theme emerged through each of the consecutive days' sessions: finding the joy and stories of hope and possibility in moments of darkness as the denomination experiences inflection and pivot points.

During opening worship, the Rev. Dr. Robert (Bob) Faris, Moderator of the 2022 General Assembly, reflected on the threats that face the denomination in these times, which can feel as though they may succeed in "bringing us down." Bob called on the church to use "prophetic imagination" to make God's dreams tangible and real. Rather than seeing danger around every corner, he urged those present to recall how the church has lived out God's call over the ages and to focus on creating a community where all are loved and welcome.

Celebrating and welcoming the new moderator

During Mary's installation, the National Indigenous Ministries Council (NIMC) members enveloped Mary in a star blanket after Elder Dorothy Vissers performed a sacred smudging ceremony and played the drum song. It was a moving time as Mary shared her story of letting go of anger over the trauma left by the residential school system. She spoke of her call and journey of forgiveness and healing.

Moments of reflection and decision

The Assembly considered the reports submitted by the church's



The Rev. Mary Fontaine was installed as Moderator of the 2023 General Assembly following opening worship by the Rev. Dr. Robert (Bob) Faris on Sunday, June 4.

standing committees. The reports contained stories of ministry, mission and hope connected to the church's work and witness in the world.

The International Affairs Committee's report contained several recommendations on issues of international concern. Drawing on the church's history of advocacy, the Assembly agreed to encourage the Government of Canada to support the human rights of Palestinians. In addition, the commissioners decided to express support for the Government of Canada's efforts to stand with the LGBTQI+ community in Uganda and around the world, as well as its call to the Government of Uganda to revoke its 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act. In addition, the Assembly supported a commissioner's motion that the moderator works with the Canadian Council of Churches on a statement by Christian leaders in Canada in connection with ending harm and violence towards the LGBTQI+ community and that \$50,000 be given by the church to agencies in Canada that help settle people who identify as LGBTQI+ and who flee from persecution.

The Assembly agreed that the Committee on Church Doctrine

produce a document to assist the church in responding faithfully and practically in pastoral situations involving medical assistance in dying (MAID), given the stigma associated with MAID and the lived experience of ministers who are called to offer pastoral care under the circumstances. The Assembly agreed that the PCC call on the Government of Canada to value the inherent dignity, worth and right to life of disabled persons in Canada and to defend the poor and the marginalized within the context of MAID.

The NIMC, which comprises eight ministries across Canada, reported on the struggles of communities that continue to live the traumatic inter-generational legacy of colonial programs that saw children taken from their families and communities, even as Indigenous people work to reclaim their culture. An ongoing rash of suicides among young Indigenous people is a profound concern. The Assembly agreed that the church commits to returning any ill-gotten artifacts as part of its healing and reconciliation efforts. In addition, the Assembly decided that a renewed apology would be drafted for the church's role in colonization and in the operation of residential schools. The draft



will be presented to the 2024 General Assembly. The Assembly also approved a confession of "racial bias [...] and our sin of racism" and to hold services of repentance so that the Confession be presented in the context of worship.

Times on Monday and Tuesday were set aside to allow commissioners to share stories of hope in table groups and reflect on a structure that may help our denomination live out that hope into the future. The Assembly Council will use this information as it reflects on the denomination's future and how best to support the church's mission.

Ecumenical and interfaith guests

The Rev. Dr. Carlos Emilio Ham, the rector of the Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas, Cuba, told the Assembly that "we accompany you in prayer when you reaffirm God's mission and embrace all the challenges as the Church of Jesus Christ in a multireligious and multiethnic society today, namely increasing secularization; commitment for peace, human rights and integrity of creation; pastoral concern for First Nations peoples; dialogue with other churches and religious denominations; human sexuality; and international relations, among others." Carlos, who has served as a pastor of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba for over 35 years, is President Emeritus of the Caribbean Conference

of Churches.

The Rev. Yoichi Nakae, Moderator of the 56th General Assembly of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, brought with him a message of building a church that serves society across societal divisions. The Rev. Nakae was accompanied by the Rev. Byungho Kim, General Secretary of the Korean Christian Church in Japan and director of the Council of Overseas Korean Churches for Education and Ministry, as well as serving on the Board of Counsellors of the Centre for Minority Issues and Mission (CMIM)—a ministry supported by the PCC. David McIntosh, co-director of CMIM in Tokyo, Japan, accompanied Yoichi and Byungho to the 2023 General Assembly.

The Rev. Susan Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, brings a deep commitment to ecumenism. She challenged the Assembly to "stop worrying about what we don't have and thank God for the gifts we have and get on with our work." She also noted that with Mary's election as moderator, four women leaders now represent the four mainline Protestant churches—a truly historical moment she could not have imagined possible. "We are growing spiritually," she said. "There are new ways that we can do more together."

Rabbi David Ellis, Rabbi-at-large to the Jewish communities of Atlantic Canada, spoke passionately about Christians and Jewish people reading and interpreting scripture and commentaries together. He invoked the words attributed to Rabbi Tarfon that "it is not up to you to finish the task, but you are not free to avoid it," as an encouragement to the Assembly.

2023 Cutting Edge of Mission Award

Each year at General Assembly, an award is given to recognize a person or group for their work on the cutting edge of mission. This year's award recipient was The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), which is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization of over 600 families who have lost immediate family members to the ongoing conflict. The award was



The gathering of commissioners, student representatives, staff and guests at the 2023 General Assembly.

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Laila AlShekh is a Muslim Palestinian, a mother and an active member of PCFF. Born and raised in Jordan, she moved to Bethlehem, Palestine/Israel, where her husband grew up. The joy of returning to her homeland was cut short when her son Qusay died in 2002 at only six months old. Israeli soldiers prevented Laila and her husband from taking him to the hospital, which was only a 20-minute drive away. The delay in seeing a healthcare worker resulted in her baby's death. Laila sees herself as a survivor, not a victim. She actively seeks opportunities to share her story to bring about peace and reconciliation.

Robi Damelin is the Israeli spokesperson for PCFF, whose son, David, was killed by a Palestinian sniper in 2002 while guarding a checkpoint near a settlement during his army reserve service. Since becoming active in the PCFF, Robi has spoken to Israelis, Palestinians and people all over the world to demand that reconciliation be a part of any peace agreement. In 2014, Robi was selected by the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice as one of four Women Peacemakers. She was named a 2015 Woman of Impact by Women in the World. She is the protagonist featured in the documentary "One Day after Peace" and regularly contributes to *The Forward* and *Huffington Post*.



Robi Damelin and Laila AlShekh, who accepted the Cutting Edge of Mission Award on behalf of the Parents Circle – Families Forum.

accepted on Tuesday morning by Laila AlShekh and Robi Damelin, two women who are living embodiments of wisdom and courage and are both active members of PCFF. They are working toward reconciliation, sustainable peace and a just resolution to the conflict in Palestine/Israel.

For more on the award, the stories of PCFF and Laila and Robi, past recipients, and to watch a recording of the recipients' acceptance speeches, visit presbyterian.ca/cutting-edge.

During morning worship on the last day, the Rev. Dr. Joon-ki Kim noted that "without connections, we are meaningless fragments" and that as church, we need to continue to "recentre the power of community [and celebrate] the stories of life—of the ordinary and the unique."

Back together for the first time in four years, the Assembly offered many opportunities for connection, of talking to each other, of being and worshipping together, and of reframing how the church thinks of itself, how it tells its story, and what the many examples are of hope, courage and commitment, even at the most difficult of moments. As Susan reminded the gathering, the PCC does not walk alone. This echoed Mary's invitation throughout the three-day pro-

ceedings to join her in a song of welcome and gratitude, lifting up God's gift of community.

The 2023 GA web page contains the minutes of the proceedings, links to video recordings of proceedings and presentations, and links to voting results, photos, full committee reports and much more. Visit presbyterian.ca/ga2023.



The Rev. Mary Fontaine greets special guest Bishop Susan Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Speaking of Mental Health...

By the Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks, retired professor of Pastoral Theology at Vancouver School of Theology and Atlantic School of Theology

Mental health—two words that are in the news a lot. Pro athletes, politicians, students, health care professionals, emergency responders—so many people are talking about their mental health. Sadly, it is often mentioned when someone is in crisis, too often with tragic outcomes. There are apps to help us, and support groups are springing up in many communities. Emails from our health insurers remind us to take care of our mental health. After three years of pandemic isolation, anxiety, grief and anger, and in a time of economic pressures, mental health has found a place in our public conversation and, one hopes, in our attention to our personal well-being.

So how is the conversation about mental health in your congregation? As I reflect on my years of pastoral ministry and teaching, I recognize gaps in the conversations I initiated. In the 1970s, when I started out in congregational ministry, mental health was often raised about someone else. "It's his nerves," someone might say. "She's always been a bit high strung." These were neighbourly cues about someone's mental health. Yet rarely did people speak



Learn more about Sanctuary Mental Health at sanctuarymentalhealth.org.

about their own mental health. Folks would tell me about arthritis pain or a cancer diagnosis, but if mental and spiritual well-being seemed unsettled, not a word. Too risky. And my basic training for ministry hadn't equipped me with the courage or language to open a conversation. I tried to be more attentive in my years as a professor of pastoral theology, but with so much to pack into a curriculum, we didn't create much space for what has become such a significant topic in public discourse these days. Is your congregation courageous enough to enter the conversation?

Back in 2020, just two months before the pandemic swallowed us up, I was invited to help test out a resource to equip congregations to have such conversations. The timing seems God-given now! Ten of us signed on to

evaluate The Sanctuary Course, prepared by Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries, based in Vancouver. I hadn't heard of it before but joined in willingly to learn more about the eight-part study, which explores what are common and deeply affecting challenges to our mental well-being. Prepared by a team of health professionals—those skilled in ministry and social work, pastoral theologians and people who had faced mental health crises themselves—this resource combines first-person storytelling and biblical reflections with teaching offered through reading, conversation and presentation. It offers a rich foundation for face-to-face conversation around our study table. Now, it doesn't set out to make anybody a mental health counsellor. Rather, it offers insight from people now able to share

their experiences of past crises, followed by illumination by skilled professionals who give listening cues on how to respond if we encounter similar situations ourselves or with others. As a listener, I appreciated how those who had faced mental health crises in the past could now reflect on how their faith shaped their experience only to be reshaped through it.

However, what was even more remarkable was how The Sanctuary Course opened our local group's ability to talk about our own experiences. Everyone in that group had some encounters and relationships in which mental well-being had been challenged—but we had never talked about those experiences with each other before. The eight weeks together deepened our connections and opened up our ability to reach out within the congregation in what then became such a stressful time shortly after we'd completed the course. We'd experienced "sanctuary" in the sense of that safe space in which God's presence sheltered us under the wings of the Spirit. We are better able to invite others into that sanctuary now.

Now that The Sanctuary Course material has been revised in light of feedback from the groups who'd tested it, I looked up the website to see what is currently available. For, truly, every day some group's mental health

concerns are in the news. I was impressed to see that the network is expanding and the resources are available—free of charge!—to groups and congregations not only in Canada, but internationally, too. This project has its roots in the Vancouver network of theological education institutions, and its resources are now available for students and residents at St. Andrew's Hall, Regent College and the Vancouver School of Theology. Its patron is the current Archbishop of Canterbury; and its staff and resource people have a wide ecumenical embrace and multidisciplinary expertise. The conversations it features are wise, easy to engage in, never judgemental and openly faithful without being glib about the mystery of how God's healing power works in us, through us and around us. Its resources are provided free to congregations willing to engage in the journey.

If your congregation wants to become more adept at talking about mental health and supporting people feeling its challenges these days, look up the website for details: sanctuarymentalhealth.org/sanctuarycourse. The Sanctuary Course is a timely resource to deepen relationships and equip people with the language to enter into conversations about this significant topic. Take the time to have a look!

Hybrid Worship and Programming for Your Church

One Congregation's Experience

By the Rev. Dr. Harris Athanasiadis, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

Like many congregations during the pandemic, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., gathered online. And, like many congregations, amazing things happened. The congregation grew to include many beyond the neighbourhood. Who were these people? Some were from congregations that did not provide remote worship or programming, and some joined because they found us online or because someone invited them. The amazing thing was, it didn't matter where in the world a person lived, Zoom and live-stream worship made accessibility and participation the same for all.

In the fall of 2022, gathering in person for worship and programming resumed. What would become of the online and live-stream programs? What about all the other online ways spiritual and informational content had been sent out? Could we sustain what we had done during the pandemic and continue the in-person worship,

gathering and programming?

The answer is yes. One of the biggest decisions we made was to preserve what we had started online during the pandemic, even as we returned to in-person worship, gathering and programming. We provide a high-quality live-stream worship experience every Sunday, and, even as we have re-introduced in-person coffee hour after church, we have continued to gather early afternoon online via Zoom, for "zoomffee hour." The people who gather with us online are fully part of our community, even though some of them cannot be with us in person because of geographical distance or mobility issues. We have several midweek and weekend programs; activities; discussion, study and prayer groups. Some gatherings are strictly on Zoom and some are strictly in-person (and we live stream/videotape the in-person events and record our online ones for any and all to take in at more convenient times). Now, many congregants will take in worship throughout the week because they were unable to join us during the actual worship ser-

vice on Sunday morning.

Has our growth in in-person worship and gathering caused a waning of online participation? Not at all. People feel they have multiple options for access and our overall participation has increased immensely. We are growing in the number of people participating in-person even as we continue to build a solid online community. Some people are strictly online and some are strictly in-person. But many also cross over and are building a bridge between both online and in-person connections. Some of us are even travelling to different parts of the country and connecting to folks we have only met online.

Finally, we have also experimented with hybrid events and worship, meaning, with a couple of laptops, phones, a few screens and an "owl" audio/video conferencing device, we've been able to bring people together whether they are online or in-person at the same time. They can see each other and listen to each other.

While we have held hybrid events this year, including our Annual General Meeting with record



The tech setup at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church for hybrid events.

attendance and participation, our single most special event was our first membership Sunday as we emerged from Covid lockdowns in the fall of 2022. We had 10 new adult members, some of whom were in person and some online.

So what does all this mean for us and, perhaps, for you? Online programming requires a continued commitment and learning on how to run groups, discussions and other events in an online format and providing the highest quality live-stream experience possible. It also requires a commitment to send out content, including written material, pictures and videos. It requires a commitment to make accessibility fully possible, no matter where a person is located. It requires the total buy-in of the Session and congregation. It requires a lot of new learning for ministers, staff and volunteers who had never experienced any of this way of providing church before Covid. And perhaps most importantly, it requires spiritual imagination about what church can yet be and the ways in which people may yet participate, engage and grow.



The Rev. Harris Athanasiadis and Michael Nettleton, Clerk of Session.



Recognizing Elders in Richmond Hill



Eleanor Haluza (centre left) receives the Elder Emeritus certificate.

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

On Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023, Richmond Hill Presbyterian (RHPC), in Richmond Hill, Ont., celebrated

two elders who retired with Elder Emeritus Certificates.

The first certificate was presented in memoriam to Lois Leonard, and was received by her two sons, Paul and Mark. The second one was presented to Eleanor Haluza.

Lois Leonard joined RHPC in 1960, and for 61 years was a very active professing member, having served 36 of those years as an elder (since 1985). Some of her involvement was as convener of the Pastoral Care Committee, member of the Finance and Maintenance Committee, member of the choir, member of the Women's Association, and a member of the Women's Missionary Society. Lois was also involved in organizing the Christmas Bazaar, Rummage Sales and Burns Supper, and catered to funerals as part of the Funeral Reception Team. All tasks she undertook with fortitude, drive and dedication in serving God's church.



Paul and Mark Leonard (holding the certificate) receive the Elder Emeritus certificate on behalf of their mother, the late Lois Leonard.

Eleanor Haluza joined RHPC in 1988 and was an active professing member for 35 years. For many years she was a teacher in the Sunday school, a role she enjoyed and was very dedicated to. She chaired the Design Committee and led the implementation of the Sunday school's Workshop Rotation Program. This also included designing Sunday school T-shirts, classroom activities and working with the teachers to put this new program into ef-

fect. Eleanor organized and directed many Christmas pageants over the years. She also chaired the Chancel Committee, beautifully decorating the Chancel for all seasons. Eleanor was an active member of the Christmas Gala Team. She became an elder in 2007 and served until 2022. For eight of those years, she served as Clerk of Session.

The congregation is grateful for the many gifts shared by Lois and Eleanor.

The Present Crisis

By the Rev. Philip Lee, retired minister living in Fredericton, N.B.

Two retired Presbyterian ministers got together on a writing project. One had spent most of his life as a pastoral minister, the other as a professor of theology. They were classmates and old friends. It occurred to them that while every generation has its own crises to contend with, our own generation has a critical one: we are facing a dangerous political turn toward authoritarianism resembling, in many ways, the disastrous rise of Fascism in Europe during the 1930s. This movement, taking place here in North America, is being enthusiastically supported by millions of Evangelical Protestants. Without their passionate support, this calamity would not be taking place.

In response to the Christian churches' complicity in the rise of the Nazi regime in the 1930s, Dietrich Bonhoeffer declared: "Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. God will not hold us guiltless." In our current situation, mainline churches have been, for the most part, reluctant to speak or to act on these "misrepresentations" if not perversions of the faith.

So, in light of this development, and a vision of our calling, Philip J. Lee of Fredericton, N.B., and Alexander J. McKelway of Irvington, Virginia, have been sending out a blog entitled, "The Present Crisis." The blog has had 31 issues, and the following is an example, number XXIV.

To subscribe, visit medium.com/@pjee_39329 and click "Follow."

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and



you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8: 31–32).

In these familiar words, Jesus promises his disciples that following his teachings will keep them in the realm of truth, of reality. Truth/reality is the opposite of lies, of unreality. And while the consequences of truth/reality are freedom—a free spirit, a free community—the consequences of lies are bondage, bondage of the person and bondage of the community.

The source of our present crisis is the willful promotion of lies, the denial of reality. One of the two political parties in the United States, in fact the party whose first elected President was

Abraham Lincoln, is sponsoring the lie that the 2020 federal election was stolen. Its leader, ex-President Trump, recently said at a large rally that he, Donald J. Trump, had not only won the election, but he had won it by a landslide in all 50 states. In reality, of course, President Biden won the Electoral College vote 306 to 232 and the popular vote by over 7 million. However, the Republican audience at the rally responded to Trump's preposterous untruth with roars of approval.

If that were not alarming enough, how do we deal with the fact that the great majority of folk at the rally, and of Republicans in general, are professing Christians?

The core of the party are right-wing Evangelicals and right-wing Roman Catholics. Without the passionate support of those claiming to be disciples of Jesus, there would be no MAGA movement.

Hannah Arendt, in her monumental work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1950), helps us understand what is happening. Arendt tells us that lies are necessary for the overcoming of democracy and its replacement with autocratic rule. She says that for this transition to take place it is necessary to create "a fictitious world through consistent lying."

Hannah Arendt's analysis of the rise of totalitarianism in the 1930s is frightfully prophetic of our pre-

sent crisis. She points out that "the chief qualification of a mass leader has become unending infallibility; he can never admit an error." The parallel with Donald J. Trump is obvious. While no rational human being can claim to be flawless, Trump has never admitted a weakness or error, despite his numerous moral and mental failures.

Arendt also draws attention to another component in the cultivation of a fictitious world based on consistent lying: "a mixture of gullibility and cynicism is prevalent in all ranks of totalitarian movements, and the higher the rank the more cynicism weighs down gullibility. The essential conviction shared by all ranks, from fellow travellers to leader, is that politics is a game of cheating and that the first commandment, 'the (leader) is always right,' is as necessary for the purposes of world politics, i.e., world-wide cheating, as the rules of military discipline are for the purposes of war."

Could there be a better description of the present Republican Party? Certainly, the higher ranks of the party—the senators, members of congress, various state officials—do not for a minute believe that the 2020 election was stolen, much less that Trump won by a landslide, but how many of them have broken ranks and spoken out for the democratic process? Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger are outstanding exceptions, and both have been virtually expelled from the party.

Jesus promised that the truth, a correlation with the reality of God and of God's creation, would make us free. The opposite—the lie, a disconnect with the reality of God and God's creation—will deliver us into bondage. That choice looms.



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Young Adult Ministry Welcomes Students Far from Home



Participants of the Young Adult Ministry program at the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal, Que.

By Keith Randall, the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal, Que.

It will soon be that time of year again. Whether heading to kindergarten or first-year university, kids and parents face a step into the future with various degrees of anticipation and apprehension. The K-12 school down the street is one thing; a university in a distant city or country brings new ideas, new friends, new residences and, yes, new challenges and new isolation.

Whether at home or far away, one constant remains: within a few minutes of any university campus is a church, a worldwide symbol of hospitality.

The Rev. Susan Brasier, Associate Minister for Community Connection and Care at Montreal's Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, launched her small-group Young Adult Ministry last year, welcoming students from two nearby universities, McGill

and Concordia, along with others already working and a few young-at-heart seniors inspired by youthful energy.

"I lived through my boys going off to university, so I know how a parent feels," she said. "And our children, whether raised in the church, absolutely without religion or even of another religion, welcome the friendship and encouragement they can find in a church."

The Rev. Brasier, an enthusiastic cook, has hosted students in her own apartment, and encouraged students from China, India, Italy, New Orleans and elsewhere to teach new friends recipes they learned in their homes, as well as prepare lunches for the local Native Friendship Centre. There have been cross-country ski and museum excursions, even a day at a *cabane à sucre* for Quebec maple syrup. And she has been a caring listener for young people who are now far from their home and childhood friends.

"It's not uncommon for new university students to feel the anxiety of being without guidance or direction, facing life's trials on their own for the first time," said Aaron Yan-Lam Law from Hong Kong, already teaching English as a second language in a local school. "Our young adults gather and build friendships, navigating through their new hopes and dreams, knowing they are not doing this alone."

India Sturgeon moved to Montreal from Czechia in 2021 at Covid's peak, an exciting and nerve-racking trip into the unknown.

"Finding St. Andrew and St. Paul and meeting Susan has not only furthered my connection with God, but has made me feel loved, supported and at home, even if my own family is thousands of miles away. I've met people just like me and others who couldn't be more different who have taught

me about their cultures. I've felt beyond welcomed, which has given me comfort throughout the rest of my university career knowing that I am not really on my own."

If your church is near a university, you can reach out to the student-relations office or just show up with a handful of pamphlets to events during initiation week. A few bright-eyed students can bring new fresh air and laughter

to any congregation.

Students, whether first-year or post-doc, might venture into one of those churches in the neighbourhood. You'll find welcome, lively conversation, good food and good company. And if you are a parent, the Internet will lead you to a church near that new university, a church that knows that "whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."



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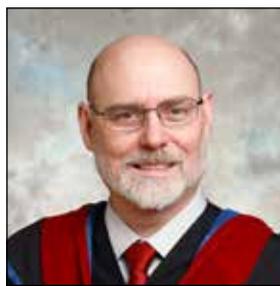
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Master of Divinity and the
Diploma of College



James Andrew MacDonald
Master of Divinity and the
Diploma of College



Eun Jae (James) Park
Master of Divinity and the
Diploma of College



Christine Elasene Samuel
Master of Divinity and the
Diploma of College



Matthew Paul Vizzari
Master of Divinity and the
Diploma of College



HyeongShin Kim
Master of Divinity



**Mary Claire
Brockenshire Lemiski**
Master of Theological Studies



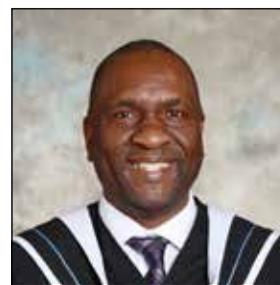
**Sharon Elizabeth
Benjamins**
Master of Pastoral Studies
(Social Services)



Steven Andrew Boose
Master of Pastoral Studies
(Spiritual Care)



Inmyoung Hwang
Master of Pastoral Studies
(Congregational Leadership)



Edwin Barclay Anderson
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



**Nikita Gisela
Salvacion Ariganello**
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



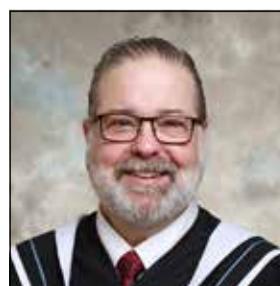
Tyler Borg
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



Vanessa Casalnuovo
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



Nicholas Corrado
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



Bruce Edwin Dow
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



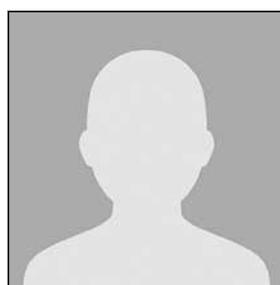
Zachary Alexander Hair
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



Chong Sun Erin Ko
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



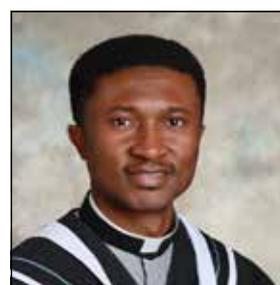
Anne Komanecki
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Kyung Eun Lee
Master of Pastoral Studies
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Psychotherapy Certificate



Megan Julia Mootoo
Master of Pastoral Studies
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Darlington Oparaike
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Mark Paci
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with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



Chelsey Adilyn Tan
Master of Pastoral Studies
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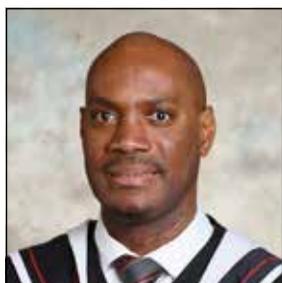
Sannie Yuet-San Tang
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Psychotherapy Certificate



Laura Diane Woolner
Master of Pastoral Studies
with the Spiritual Care and
Psychotherapy Certificate



Zoe Zhiyi Zhao
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Psychotherapy Certificate



Hewitt Talbert Holmes
Master of Arts



Monika Berezcki-Farkas
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Hyungjong Choi
Doctor of Theology



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Jacqueline Cleland
Master of Divinity (MDiv)



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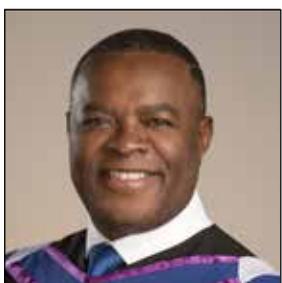


Nehemia Neuhisa Surbakti
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Jaehong Lim
Master of Divinity (MDiv)

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Prossy Nabakooza
Master of Divinity, The
Presbyterian College (with
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Jimmy Pereira
Master of Theological Studies,
The Presbyterian College
(with Institut de Théologie
pour la Francophonie)



Grégory Renaud
Master of Theological Studies,
The Presbyterian College
(with Institut de Théologie
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Elodie Parize Moreno
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Fire at St. Andrew's Barrie



Ellen Millar inspecting fire damage at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Barrie, Ont.

By Laurie Watt, Communications Coordinator, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Barrie, Ont.

Two months after the mid-February fire that devastated the Christian education wing at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Barrie, Ont., Ellen Millar still tears up as she recalls sorting through the debris.

The life-long member of St. Andrew's was the most qualified person to assess what remained in terms of contents after a \$2.5-million fire, which was attributed to arson. The blaze broke out the Sunday night of Family Day Weekend, and what it didn't consume it left covered in soot or partially charred, including some historical items.

Ellen, an archivist for Simcoe County, was profession-



Music director Anne Arksey and office administrator Rosemary Walton at the Friday fellowship time.

ally qualified to deal with what remained, but seeing what had been destroyed and what needed to be assessed was emotionally draining. Ellen attended Sunday school, Brownies and Guides, and youth group at St. Andrew's. It was where her family invested a lot of time and energy, as her father served many years as the Clerk of Session, as well as being the congregation's historian.

"It was tough," she said. "Smoke was hanging in the air and there was grit in my eyes. There was soot everywhere. I went into emergency professional role. My archives training included emergency disaster planning and recovery. I was trying to maintain a professional demeanour."

Anything that contained plastic or was contained in plastic had to immediately be thrown out—including dozens of mittens, hats, scarves and socks donated by the community for the Women's Missionary Society's Little Winter Warmers Tree.

Anything that touched food in the commercial-grade kitchen, from which charity meals were served, also had to be discarded. China and glassware collected over the years was suddenly of no value.

"It took us 174 years to accumulate this stuff and I knew we'd not be replacing it all at once, and some of it wouldn't be replaced."

Ellen's attention turned from

the kitchen to community spaces, where she saw banners celebrating anniversaries and church-year events. That was one instance when the loss hit her personally.

"I helped make a Noah's Ark banner when I was in youth group. It was discarded." Ellen explained that all textiles, especially the church's extensive collection of seasonal and commemorative banners, were lost. "It was sad."

Barrie Police laid an arson charge in relation to the fire. Security footage showed the Alcoholics Anonymous group that rented space on Sunday nights locking up. An hour later, security footage showed a man leaving by the rear parking lot door and, shortly after, flames erupting from the library—the hub where teams planned their work, including sponsoring refugees.

"It could have been much, much worse," said Mark Hoffman, chair of the Board of Managers, noting that there were no injuries. Keeping the media informed, Mark explained how the fire started in the library and that the damage—water, soot, smoke and fire crew work—spread to the rest of the Christian Education wing. The business continuity/crisis management specialist worked with insurance adjusters and contractors and analyzed reports and estimates to ensure numbers being discussed were accurate and fair. He ensured the church responded appropriately to the City of Barrie's Order to Remedy.

He also explained the complexities of insurance to the congregation, which still must decide whether to take a settlement from the insurance company or restore the Christian Education wing. He added it wasn't until September 2022 when St. Andrew's Barrie required groups renting space to provide a certificate of insurance. He was grateful for the policy change that will allow the church to make a claim against AA's \$5-million liability coverage. He's committed to pursuing that claim.

"Establish very early on with any outside groups who use your church what your expectations are—things like clearing and securing the building. Ensure liability insurance is in place and keep an insurance certificate on file," he recommends.

"Consider providing security and pass that cost onto the groups," Hoffman added, knowing that many community groups have limited funds. "With \$2.5 million in damages later, this is important to

consider. You have to enter into this as a business would."

Ellen Millar agreed taking a business-like approach is helpful. A key strategy is to maintain an inventory of assets, so that when a claim has to be made, there's good information. "People don't think of the church as a business, but we should apply business techniques, like inventorying your space and taking photographs," she noted. "When people make appraisals, think more than monetary value."

Human resources—the skills, training and experience that people bring—are also important. At St. Andrew's, the congregation includes an engineer, a retired businessman who has experience with a fire in his business, and a business continuity specialist with crisis communications training.

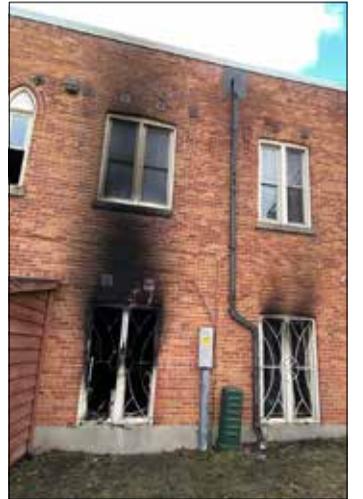
"Inventory the skills people bring to the table," Ellen suggested.

It likely won't be until autumn before the congregation can regain access to the sanctuary. The congregation is worshipping in the chapel of a nearby funeral home, started by a long-time elder of St. Andrew's. The chapel can easily hold the 100 people or so who attend worship. Unfortunately, there's no fellowship space there, so the Rev. Joanne Lee offers a fellowship time Friday mornings at a nearby United church where St. Andrew's offices have relocated.

"In any grief-related situations, family and friends need to come together. I often think of Acts 2:42-47," she said. "We may not do everything as stated but one thing that's certain is we come together for fellowship. Folks, if they are in the area, can drop by to sit and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea or just pop in to say hello. We can't miss out on Marlene's homemade signature shortbread cookies or her oatmeal Rice Krispies cookies." About 20 people attend on Fridays.



Fire damage in the library.



The congregation must consider what to do with the addition built in the 1920s. Constructed on sandy soil in Barrie's city core, St. Andrew's has been struggling with what to do with its building for decades.

"In the '70s, you had to spend money to push out the walls. It was good for 30 years. The elevator couldn't go in the Christian Education wing because it was sinking in three corners," recalled the Rev. Keith Boyer, who was involved in a redevelopment committee that saw its results shelved due to cost.

Keith noted there's a blessing in the fire. The sandy soils in Barrie's downtown core have challenged St. Andrew's previously. Ongoing construction, which now involves pile driving, continues to shake the sandy soils.

"It's time to rethink what we're about. We're gifted this fire. Something God sends is not a destroying fire but a refining fire, a gift for us to become better and all we're called to be."



100th Anniversary of Rocky Memorial Presbyterian Church



By Gerda Groothuizen, Memorial Presbyterian Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alta.

The 100th anniversary of Memorial Presbyterian Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alta., was in 2022, and on April 1, 2023, this occasion was celebrated by hosting an anniversary tea. The celebration program included a display of memorabilia and greetings from many dignitaries, elders and others. Our MP, Gerald Soroka, presented the church with a 100th Anniversary plaque.

The Presbyterian Church in Rocky Mountain House, Alta., has



a long history, dating back to the settlement of the town. The first Presbyterian church was built in 1922 and named Memorial Presbyterian as a tribute to those in the district who had died in World War I.

In 1938, the church helped es-



Elders (left to right) Harold Magnus, Wendy Wadden, Shirley Tessmer, Connie Madsen, Elaine Blezard (seated) and Member of Parliament Gerald Soroka.

establish the area's first hospital, with the women's group setting out to raise money toward the cost of the building. The Women's Missionary Society, based in Ontario, agreed to furnish and equip the hospital if the community could raise \$4,000. This was a daunting task in the 1930s, but with support from the community the funds were raised and a 10-bed hospital was opened.

A beautiful stained-glass window was commissioned and dedicated to the community's fallen heroes. A plaque displays their names. In the 1960s, a new church was built, and the window was relocated. In honour of our new building, a Margaret Sutherland weaving was commissioned, depicting our surrounding area. We are truly blessed with two beautiful works of art.

Birthday Bash in Stouffville

By Bruce Stapley, St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont. Reprinted from On the Road in Whitchurch-Stouffville magazine

A pair of distinguished Stouffville seniors was feted at a surprise birthday celebration in the basement hall of St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., after the April 16 service.

Legendary Stouffville newspaperman Jim Thomas turned 94 on April 9, with his wife Jean reaching the 90-year milestone eight days later. Members of the congregation were joined by an array of exemplary senior Stouffville celebrities, including former Whitchurch-Stouffville Citizens of the Year Diane Ward and Marion Wells, and Stouffville Legion Seniors' Chair Rochelle D'Souza.

Adding to the lustre of the event was the announcement that Jim had been inducted into the Ontario Community Newspapers Association (OCNA) Hall of Fame for his 73 years as a journalist in Stouffville and the surrounding area. The award recognizes and celebrates individuals who have made exemplary contributions to Ontario's community newspapers, and news professionals who have remained passionate throughout challenges, opportunities and changes, while helping their papers adapt and grow.

Jim took a posting as a part-



The congregation of St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., held a surprise celebration for church members Jim and Jean Thomas, following a service in honour of Jim's 94th birthday and Jean's milestone 90th.

time sportswriter with the *Stouffville Tribune* in 1949, then was hired full-time two years later. The paper was on the receiving end of 30 awards over the

40 years he was employed there, including the 1962 citation for Best Sports Page in Canada. He had been *Tribune* editor for over 25 years when he retired in 1989,

moving on to take a feature columnist posting with the *Stouffville Sun* shortly afterwards. When the *Tribune* and *Sun* amalgamated in 2000, he continued his column, finally signing off last year.

Fellow St. James congregant Jim Mason, who helped arrange the birthday event for Jim and Jean, recalls the friendly competition between the two Jims while he served as editor of the *Stouffville Sun* from its inception in 1982. "I was the new kid invading his turf," said Jim Mason. "But he was always classy and professional when we crossed paths. It's no easy task trying to go toe-to-toe with a legend. I was much happier when Jim retired from the *Tribune* and joined the team at the *Sun*."

Standing beside his wife of 63 years in front of a crowd-sized birthday cake, Jim credited Jean for his success and longevity in the newspaper business and his full life in general. "I must say it's been a wonderful, wonderful relationship over the past 63 years, and I owe everything to her," he said.

Jean, who was born and raised in Pickering Township, worked in the community after graduating high school. Upon marrying Jim in 1959, she was soon busy raising the couple's six children.

While Jim is best known for his journalistic exploits, his career would go on to have a patchwork

appearance when he stopped working full-time in that field in 1989. He worked as a security guard for several years at Upper Canada Mall in Newmarket and was a greeter at the O'Neil Funeral Home in Stouffville. The past 16 years have seen him employed as a school crossing guard at the busy Millard St./Glad Park Ave. intersection, where his efforts haven't gone unnoticed. "One Christmas, a young lad about seven years old proudly presented me with a hand-printed card that read, 'To Mr. Jim, one of the best crossing guards I know,'" he wrote in a March 2022 column.

The St. James knitting group presented Jim with a scarf to help him keep warm while doing crossing guard duty in winter.

Jim's community engagements have been impressive. While at the *Tribune* he created the popular Whitchurch-Stouffville Citizen of the Year award, an honour that would be bestowed upon him after his retirement from the *Tribune*. He also created the Music Town Ontario award and concert as well as the Stouffville Student Music Scholarship and is involved with Strawberry Festival.

We'll let Jim Mason have the last word: "Jim's legacy? The music concerts, his work at the *Tribune*, the unofficial town scribe... the lives he has touched."

Amen to that.

Memorial Service in Rosedale

On Saturday, May 6, a special memorial service was held at Rosedale Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., to mark one year since the horrific discovery of a young girl's body in a dumpster in the community. To honour and affirm the life and dignity of this child, and every child, the congregation held a public neighbourhood service of remembrance.

The girl was believed to be between the ages of four and seven, and she still has not been identified by police, although they have indicated that progress is being made in the investigation. The congregation wanted to honour and remember this little girl's brief life and to continue to raise awareness of the unsolved case. The Rev. Daniel Cho, minister at Rosedale Presbyterian Church, said that she shouldn't be forgotten, and that the community needed an opportunity to grieve together.

Attendees at the memorial

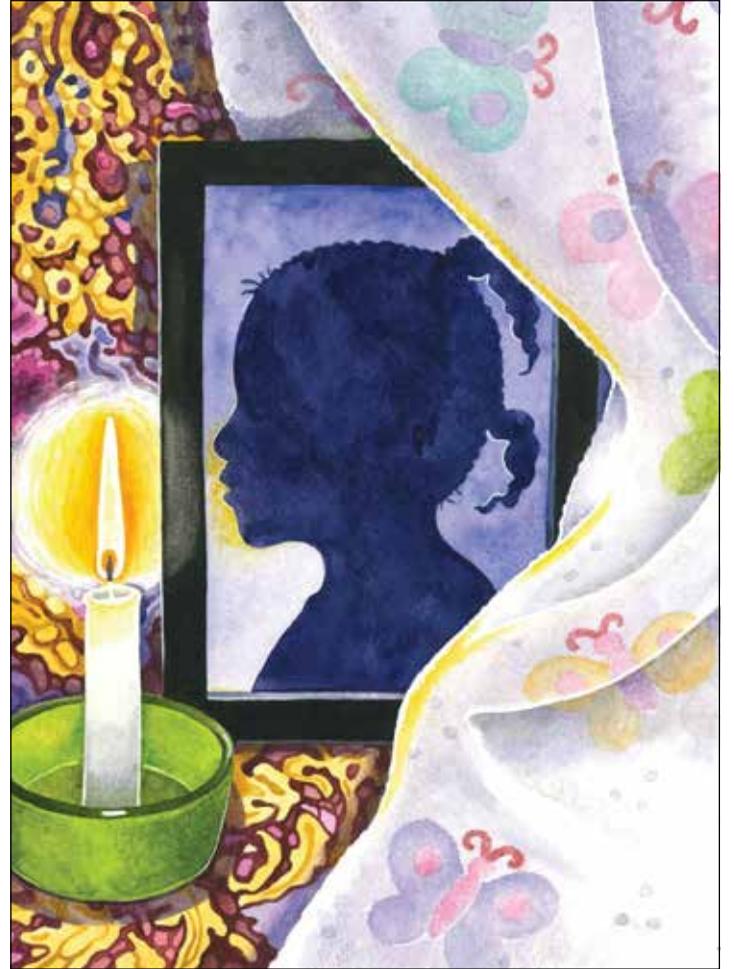
wore scarves that were knitted by members and friends of the congregation in colours resembling those of the two blankets that the girl's body was found wrapped in. Among the many who took part in the memorial were members of the Toronto Police Service, the Rev. Dr. Robert (Bob) Faris, former Moderator of the PCC, and residents of the community. The service included a "Remembering Her" reflection from the Rev. Cho, a musical meditation, prayers and hymns.

In selecting the appropriate music for this public service that captured the right tone and spirit, Music Director Christopher Dawes reached out to friends from all over the world for advice and suggestions. One of them was John L. Bell, a Scottish hymn-writer and minister with the Church of Scotland. He was so taken by the idea for this memo-

rial service that, unsolicited, he reworked an existing song of his and tailored it to the event.

"I've heard it said that her story hurt our hearts—we want so much to believe that she was loved and tenderly cared for," said the Rev. Cho during the service. "We've gathered for the opportunity to share our grief, to stand in solidarity with her, to embrace the full extent of the ugliness of this reality, and to recognize that, tragically, this can and does happen, anywhere. But most important, we are here to lift her up, and affirm the dignity of her life... We don't know her name, but we do know who she is: she is a child of God. Precious, beloved, valued, honoured."

The "Service to Remember Her" is available to watch on the Rosedale Presbyterian Church YouTube channel. Visit rosedalepresbyterianchurch.ca to learn more.



This artwork is a watercolour painting by illustrator Michele Nidenoff, a long-time member of Rosedale Presbyterian Church. The little girl is shown in profile as a silhouette because we don't know what she looked like or her exact age, although we do know that her hair was in braids. The framed picture surrounded by two blankets is a reminder that she was found wrapped in two distinctly patterned blankets. The candle in front is lit in honour and memory of this young girl and as a symbol of hope. ILLUSTRATION CREDIT: COPYRIGHT MICHELE NIDENOFF, 2023.

Building Bridges to Community in Calgary

By Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

When music teacher Dora Ismailova walked into Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church (VAPC) in Calgary, Alta., to enquire about a space for a piano recital, she didn't expect to find herself playing for Sunday services.

Dora, a Muslim from Uzbekistan, arrived in Canada with her family only four years ago and lives just a few streets from the church. She'd walked by many

times and thought it might be a good venue to hold a student recital. At the time, VAPC was working with interim musicians, following the retirement of their director of music. With two regular supply musicians, the church was looking for some additional musicians to help fill gaps.

While discussing the possibilities for a rental, the Rev. Greg Smith asked if Dora would have any interest in playing for services. She did, but wanted to think about it and discuss it with her husband. A few days later, Dora let the Rev. Smith know that she would be willing to play.

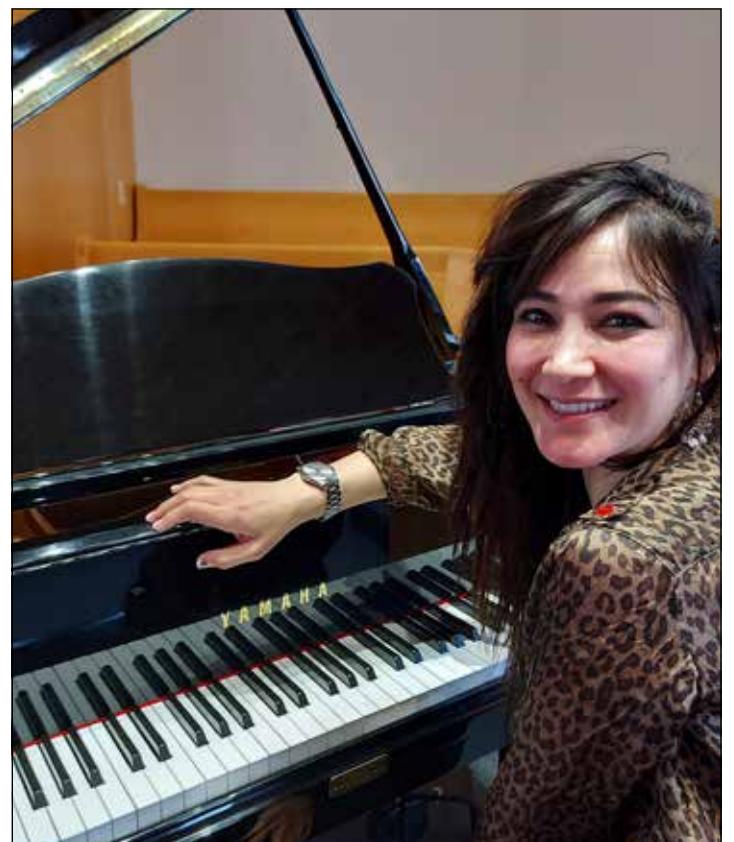
VAPC's Session unanimously supported Dora joining the roster of supply musicians. The unique nature of the relationship didn't immediately occur to her. "It didn't even come to my mind that it's a church and I'm Muslim," said Dora, thinking back on her first few

services. As she reflected on how this might seem unusual to some, she recalls being reassured by Greg's welcome at the beginning of each service.

"I remember when he would say everyone is welcome here...everyone...whatever religion, whatever gender. It was so amazing the way the people at VAPC accepted me." She found the congregation to be helpful and encouraging as well. "They were really nice and always supporting me."

Dora had never heard the hymns and worship music that she would be playing, but quickly adapted and developed an appreciation of this new music. "The melodies were very beautiful."

In time, she found that the sanctuary of the church was a place she cherished. "In the service, it was so peaceful and I would listen to the words that were being spoken too. So many



Dora Ismailova at the piano at Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church.

of the values and how we should treat people were similar to my culture."

Dora's family continued to support her work in the church for the six months that she was part of the musician roster at VAPC. Even her family in Uzbekistan would watch the services online. After six months of regular music supply with Varsity Acres, Dora

decided to focus on growing her business as an independent music teacher. She still holds fond memories of VAPC and the people she met there...and she still plays the music that she learned for services.

"I still play them, you know," said Dora, "and I feel so positively about the church and everyone there."



Camp Sunday with Cairn Family of Camps and Dixie PC



The sunrise at Glen Mhor site, part of the Cairn Family of Camps in Baysville, Ont.

By the Rev. Karen Pozios,
Dixie Presbyterian Church in
Mississauga, Ont.

On Sunday, April 16, for the first time since the pandemic shut down, Dixie Presbyterian Church in Mississauga, Ont., held its first Camp Sunday, welcoming Robynne Howard, Camp Director from the Cairn Family of Camps, to lead worship.

We are a camp-loving congregation, with a strong history of involvement in camping ministry. However, the pandemic interrupt-

ed our ability to welcome camp to join us in worship, which had been one of our most anticipated events each year. While we have continued to be connected to camp and to enjoy camping ministry in all ways that were possible during the pandemic, what a joy it was to say to Robynne the same thing the staff of the Cairn Family of Camps says to everyone who comes to camp: "Welcome home!"

Camp Sunday worship is a way for congregations to experience and celebrate camping ministry. It

is a way that in this time when we are all working to resume our various ministries, we can introduce or reintroduce camping ministry to our congregations.

Camping ministry is something that we at Dixie believe in deeply. As well as being the minister at Dixie, I am also a volunteer on the Board of the Cairn Family of Camps. Both of my children attended camp and one has been on staff. The coordinator of our Sunday school at Dixie is a camp mainstay who will receive her celebratory canoe (a wooden outline with her name on it that will hang in the lodge) this year, marking her 30 years of attending camp. Many of our young people have attended camp and quite a few have also served on staff. Some mature adults, individuals and families attend Family Camp and other "all ages" or "adult only" programs. Camping ministry has had an enormous impact on the faith formation of our congregation. However, after the three years when camping ministry—along with everything else in our lives—was different or not possible, we are now working hard to restart our involvement at camp in order to reignite the delight of camping ministry and light the fire



Camp Sunday photo from Sunday, April 16, with the Rev. Karen Pozios and Robynne Howard of the Cairn Family of Camps leading worship.

of faith in us all.

Camp offers children and young people, as well as older individuals and families, a place to experience what it feels like to be immersed in a life of joyful, extraordinary faith. At camp, from morning to night, life is infused with faith. As Camp Sunday at Dixie demonstrated, for those who don't know, the camp day is filled with prayer, praise, learning about and experiencing the love of God.

Beginning with the well-known camp song "Rise and Shine," Robynne led our time of worship, which was full of joy and rejoicing. Our time together was inspired by scriptures from John 8:12, where Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life," along with Matthew 5:14-16: "You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Creator in heaven." We laughed and learned together. Did you know that the word photography means "writing with light"? We enjoyed beautiful pictures of camp and campers en-

joying the gorgeous Glen Mhor and Iona campsites just outside Baysville, Ont., near Huntsville on Lake Echo. We spoke with God in prayer. We sang fun camp songs, beautiful well-known hymns and meditative songs of prayer. For a morning, we were at camp.

This summer, it is our hope and plan that more people will get the chance to experience camping ministry at the Cairn Family of Camps, or wherever their closest PCC Camp is located. We hope and pray that this year people of all ages will once again be a part of summer camping programs, which, at the Cairn Family of Camps, includes Glen Mhor summer camp for those ages 5 to 16, as well as Integration programs for those 17-plus, Iona Wilderness Tripping for those ages 9 to 16, and Family Camp over the August long weekend for families of all sizes and ages.

Camp Sunday was a great reminder to all of us at Dixie that summer is coming! We are looking forward to experiencing a faith-filled summer at camp. Hope to see you there!

Learn more at ilovecamp.org.

Welcoming New Refugees to Brockville

By the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr,
First Presbyterian Church in
Brockville, Ont.

First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., in partnership with local sponsorship group Brockville Freedom Connection, sponsored Somali refugee Nasro

Adan Mohamed in October 2019 through the Canadian Blended Visa Office Referral Program. When Nasro arrived, the group discovered that she had left her husband and daughter, Liiban and Afnaan, behind in Uganda, based on erroneous advice that it would be easier for them to follow Nasro once she arrived in Canada.

Through First Presbyterian Church and the PWS&D Refugee Sponsorship Team, Brockville Freedom Connection sponsored Liiban and Afnaan through the IRCC Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in January of 2020. Covid effectively shut down the world in March of 2020,

creating significant delays in the processing of their sponsorship application.

Finally, after three years of Covid delays and IRCC bureaucracy, the family were reunited in Ottawa on March 8, 2023! Brockville Freedom Connection has since been busy helping Liiban and Afnaan settle into the community with Nasro, including finding a rental house, helping obtain Social Insurance Numbers and health cards, connecting with a local family doctor and dentist, applying for Canada Child Benefits and the provincial Healthy Smiles plan for Afnaan, and helping Liiban find employment.



The Freedom Connection sponsorship team was also thrilled to find out that Liiban and Nasro will be welcoming a new little Canadian in late 2023! Many thanks to the PWS&D Refugee Sponsorship team, the sponsor volunteers, the congregation of First Presbyterian Church, and the community of Brockville for helping to make this family's dreams of a new life in Canada a reality.



Retirement Celebration at Knox, Dundas

By Leslie Powers, Clerk of Session, Gail Poole and Wayne Poole, Knox Presbyterian Church in Dundas, Ont.

A retirement celebration was held for the Rev. Penny Garrison, minister at Knox Presbyterian Church in Dundas, Ont., on Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022, following Penny's last sermon with the Binkley United Church/Knox Presbyterian Church/St. Mark's United Church ecumenical shared ministry.

Saying farewell to Penny and her husband, Steve, was difficult. We wish them well and pray that their retirement will be a time spent with family and friends, a time to relax, but also to explore and enjoy new adventures.

Penny had a strong sense of call to pastoral ministry while at Carlton University but was involved in a number of ministries before she completed her M. Div. in 2002. She interned through Knox College under the mentorship of the Rev. Dr. Herb Gale at Westminster-St.

Paul's Presbyterian Church in Guelph, and was student minister at Knox Presbyterian Church Crieff in Puslinch, Ont., while completing her studies.

Penny was ordained at St. Giles Presbyterian Church in Cambridge, where she served as minister for 10 years. The Rev. Penny found her way to Knox Presbyterian Church in Dundas where she ministered to a thankful congregation for nine and a half years, until her well-deserved retirement on January 1, 2023. Between 2019 and 2021, she also served as moderator of the Presbytery of Hamilton.

Penny served the church with a strong, lived-out faith and much enthusiasm, while encouraging and challenging us. The Rev. Penny cared deeply for her Knox family. She preached creatively, from the heart, and often shared lessons gained from her own life experience. Penny is a pragmatist and open to change.

As our numbers declined, and



The Rev. Penny Garrison and her husband, Steve.

then the pandemic changed how we all did church, we were led to examine the direction in which God was calling us. Knox Dundas journeyed through a challenging time over the last several years that saw us work through a visioning, discerning and replanting process, as well as the sale of our well-loved historical church building, demonstrating that the

church is not the building but its people.

The Rev. Penny encouraged us to examine every aspect of our ministry, question that which needed questioning and offered insight into possible new directions. In the end, a successful shared ecumenical ministry agreement was reached with St. Mark's United Church.

As expectations and required skills evolved, Penny rose to the challenge. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, she continued to focus on the safety, well-being and loving care of our congregation. She was very quick to pivot toward new ways of worshipping and connecting with the congregation. She opened her home to us via YouTube and provided inspiring worship, despite the limitations—and even if that meant repeating an entire service when the technology had not cooperated!

When we suddenly found ourselves without administrative support, Penny took on the task

of preparing the PowerPoint slides for the weekly service. Penny was also directly involved in ensuring that those without Internet access received a weekly mailing of the sermon as well as other updates. Small groups met online under the Rev. Penny's leadership for meaningful Bible study and in-depth discussions. Those challenging times were met with the Rev. Penny's can-do attitude and boundless energy.

Gratitude is also owed to Penny's husband, Steve, for his work with the Maintenance Team, as consultant to the Finance Team and for his many hours producing online worship to help us remain connected and worshipping together.

The Knox congregation remains grateful for the strong leadership and powerful faith that Penny used to journey with us during times of crisis, illness, transition and grief. We are thankful for the gifts that God gave to her to lead us through our mission and ministry.



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Clerks' Consultation

By the Rev. Don Muir, Deputy Clerk, General Assembly Office

Presbytery and Synod Clerks from across the country were invited to a gathering in Mississauga, Ont., held from April 14 to 17. Just over 30 of the 49 clerks were able to attend. Normally, this event takes place every two years, but due to Covid restrictions, this was the first chance to get together since 2018.

It's called the Clerks' Consultation, and that's exactly what it is—an opportunity for clerks to discuss the joys and challenges of their service to the church. They learn together as they review new policies and procedures, polity matters and developments

within the denomination.

Held in the Queen of the Apostles' Renewal Centre, lasting friendships are formed over meals and during breaks. An Ontario clerk said one of his favourite features of the consultation is "the collegial relationships renewed, and the new ones formed, along with the sincere and honest sharing between colleagues."

A highlight for many is the daily worship in the facility's beautiful chapel. This year, the Rev. Dr. Jean Morris served as chaplain and conducted each service. She was supported by clerks on keyboard and guitar, as well as by those who read scripture and offered prayer. "Jean Morris did an amazing job as chaplain, and the worship was

inspiring, thoughtful, challenging and encouraging," commented a clerk from Saskatchewan.

Facilitated by the General Assembly Office at national office, leadership was also drawn from six Life and Mission Agency staff, the Chief Operating Officer of the Presbyterian Church Building Corporation, and a retired minister who is a coach of the New Beginnings program.

Presbyteries and synods pay a registration fee, and about half the cost of the event is funded by your contributions to Presbyterians Sharing. This is a wonderful and effective way for our clerks to be strengthened and encouraged in their role in the courts of the church.

Visioning Exercise at Zion

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

On March 31 and April 1, the Session, Board of Trustees and search committee at Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I., were led through a visioning exercise by the Rev. Tim Purvis, Associate Secretary of Ministry & Church Vocations. This two-day seminar was entitled “Who We Are and Where We’re Going: Holy Conversations about Zion Church.”

As the position of lead minister

is currently vacant, it was church leadership’s opinion that it would be extremely helpful if these three groups could come together for such an exercise, especially to aid the search committee in their development of an updated congregational profile.

The Friday evening session laid the foundation for what would be accomplished on Saturday. The Rev. Purvis led the group through a discussion of the congregation’s history and culture to help us better understand our collective “personality.” He then provided an overview of where we

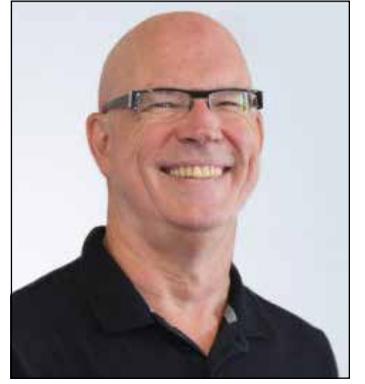
are situated as a congregation in our present-day societal context, the external influences affecting our churches and the reality that all congregations are subject to a life span—even those that have existed for centuries.

A unique exercise was undertaken where those in attendance were asked to select a hymn that could represent the “anthem” of Zion Church. A rather substantial list was created and, in fact, a future musical evening of Zion Church hymn anthems is already being planned as a result of this exercise. When reviewing the list

and lyrics, it was becoming quite clear as to who we are and where we’re going.

Saturday’s session focused mainly on a standard SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) exercise. It had been several years since this self-reflection process had been done and, thanks to Tim’s guidance and the great input by church leaders, the results were both confirming and eye opening.

Churches going through a time of vacancy or simply seeking direction are certainly advised to reach out to Ministry & Church



The Rev. Tim Purvis, Associate Secretary, Ministry & Church Vocations.

Vocations at national office as there is a wealth of material and human resources available to assist in this important facet of congregational life.

Retirement of the Rev. Dr. Kenneth MacLeod



By William G. MacKay, elder, First Sackville Presbyterian Church in Lower Sackville, N.S.

On the evening of April 22, 2023, the congregation of First Sackville Presbyterian Church in Lower Sackville, N.S., arranged a

retirement party for current interim minister, the Rev. Dr. Kenneth MacLeod.

Ken is retiring for a second time after a career spanning 52 years. Originally from Cape Breton, he has chosen to build a house on his old homestead land in his retirement.

The evening was a Cape Breton-themed party with food and decoration related to the area. Two musical groups provided entertainment for the evening: Marsha Woods and Brian Cormier, a duo who sing easy listening and Nova Scotian songs; they were assisted by another duo called Foggy Patches, consisting of Bruce Stewart and Dave Chas-son, who sing traditional folk and

contemporary folk.

Women from the church provided delicious food. I acted as emcee for the evening and presented Dr. MacLeod with a monetary gift from the congregation. Pat Kramer, one of our members, also presented a few handmade gifts. The Rev. Dr. Sandy McDonald delivered remarks on Ken’s career and his friendship.



Klaas Dekens and his award-winning matchstick reconstruction of St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church.

Serving God in Simcoe

By Linda Shaw, Elder, St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church in Simcoe, Ont.

St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church in Simcoe, Ont., was dedicated on February 14, 1886, after a year of construction. The congregation had been functioning almost 100 years without its own building. Now, we have a wonderful matchstick replica of our 137-year-old building. It was constructed after a year of work by Klaas Dekens.

Klaas has only been doing this kind of work for about three years. He used to enjoy welding when he lived on a local farm, but when he moved into a seniors’ apartment building, he had to find another craft.

Klaas is in his 80s and has Parkinson’s disease but felt called to continue to use his gifts and experiment with new ways to serve God. He began by making

birdhouses with matchsticks, and then he made a replica of his former farmhouse...and then he set his heart on making a replica of his church home.

It took him a year to construct the model, just like the present church building took a year to construct way back in 1885. The model is approximately 2’ by 2’ by 2’, and is built from thousands of matchsticks with the heads removed, and wooden lollipop sticks were also used to construct the roof. The replica has a permanent home in St. Paul’s, but was seen widely by the public at the Norfolk County Fair 2022, where it won first prize in the Craft Competition.

Now, Klaas has moved on and is building a replica of his present apartment building. He works on it every day except Sundays, when he comes to worship at St. Paul’s.

A Minister’s Return to Cape Breton

Written by William MacKay

God set out before our very eyes,
A small glimpse of paradise.
All around the blue sea roars.
The lapping waters of Bras d’Or,
The blackened seams of hidden coal,
The birches and the maples turning gold,
The spruces and the firs e’er so green,
The hills around standing so serene.

God called to one of His, a young lad,
I need you now; but don’t be sad.
Away! for now from your beloved isle.
We will use you for the next great while.
For where you go we don’t yet know,
But a life in Me will only grow.
In many far-flung places you will preach,
And many thousands will you reach.

A minister brings our God to life,
As he helps with others’ toughest strife.
A prayer with him can ease our pain,
A comfort only, God can explain.
The eager face but of a child,
Filled with awe when lessons reconciled.
Some say it’s just his learned skill,
But God is there and works the mill.

God watches and says, Well done,
Time to return back home My son.
To those green hills above the sea.
You’ve earned a rest from daily chore,
And watch by the waters of Bras d’Or.
I have set there before your eyes,
My own small glimpse of paradise.
You have built My house for many years,
So now you work till yours appears.

A Special Recognition in Winchester

By Kathy Spruit, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Winchester, Ont.

The congregation of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Winchester, Ont., wishes to recognize Phyllis MacMaster, the recipient of the Outstanding Dairy Women's Service Award of 2023.

This award was created to recognize Ontario women who "have devoted their lives to serve, promote and enhance the dairy industry." Phyllis certainly exemplifies the spirit and intent of this award. She has been a lifelong contributor to the dairy industry in so many different capacities.

Phyllis began her journey from her family's dairy farm, then went on to the University of Guelph, where she completed a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and Consumer Foods. She received the Alumni Medal of Honour in 1985. Upon graduation, she began a 36-year career with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, where she served in a variety of roles, notably demonstrating her strength and leadership by becoming the first female Agricultural Representative in Ontario. As quoted from an OAC newsletter "...she has been readily accepted



Phyllis MacMaster.

by farmers, farm leaders and the community because of her diligence and dedication."

The list of the committees, provincially and nationally, in which Phyllis plays active roles is extensive. She has been an accredited Holstein Canada judge since 1991. It has been stated that Phyllis is the "voice" of many dairy shows, locally and across the province, including the Eastern Ontario-Western Quebec Championship show, the Eastern Regional 4-H Championship show and, in 2022, the TD 4-H Classic at the Royal Winter Fair.

Despite her busy schedule, Phyllis plays an active role in her family farm operation, having

been involved with breeding, herd health and milking, and continuing to be involved with the business side after the herd was dispersed.

Phyllis is an invaluable volunteer in so many different organizations. She was inducted into the Glengarry Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2015. She is a volunteer driver in the Wheels of Hope program for the Canadian Cancer Society, and she sits on the board of directors for a local senior's non-profit residence.

Phyllis somehow finds the time to be a very active member of St. Paul's congregation. She is Clerk of Session, church Treasurer, Secretary of the Ladies Aid, a representative at presbytery meetings and helps lead worship services.

The congregation thanks Phyllis for her very capable leadership, her dedication to the work of the church, her compassion and her many hours of work in the roles she has. Wherever Phyllis is, there is laughter and joy. Her faith is true and unwavering, and she is an inspiration to all who know her.

Congratulations, Phyllis! St. Paul's is very proud of all your accomplishments and, more importantly, for the wonderful person you are. God bless you!



140 Years in Medicine Hat

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

St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta., is in the midst of a year of celebrations. The year 2023 marks the congregation's 140th anniversary of service in "The Hat," and in May, we celebrated in style.

For our first big public event in a couple of years, the women of the church and the Congregational Life and Mission Committee combined forces to hold a High Tea with an historical flavour. Starting with the fancy silver and the "real china," Taylor Hall was transformed for the day—part museum, part elegant tea house—for an event that was enjoyed by all.

Folks from the congregation contributed quilts and artifacts that harkened back to the pioneer days of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A tent commemorating "Tupper's Store" was erected in one corner of the auditorium

and filled with all manner of essential (and occasionally frivolous) goods. The tent honoured the actual tented store, where the first Presbyterian Church worship service in Medicine Hat was held on June 3, 1883, conducted by the Rev. Angus Robertson, a representative of the Presbyterian Church on a western mission tour. A number of Presbyterian missionaries conducted services in town throughout the year, allowing Presbyterians to get acquainted with one another in locations as diverse as the CPR Depot and the Brunswick Hotel.

Our anniversary tea featured a speaker from the local archives, who highlighted the enduring nature of the church in the face of many changes in the city. Our guests enjoyed lively conversation, an excellent variety of home baking, and real Devon Cream with their scones.

The celebrations at St. John's are building toward a banquet and service of celebration in early October.



Position: **LEAD MINISTER**
Location: Zion Church,
Charlottetown, PEI.



The congregation of Zion Presbyterian Church is seeking a dedicated and dynamic individual who possesses a strong personal faith in Jesus Christ based on biblical theology, to serve as Lead Minister and provide a pastoral presence, be an excellent communicator, an inspiring worship leader, and a strong collaborator who will make connections with congregational members of all ages.

To apply for this position, please submit your Personal Profile, along with a Letter of Application to the address below by the deadline of Friday, September 15, 2023:

The Rev. Paula Hamilton, Interim Moderator
c/o Zion Presbyterian Church
PO Box 103
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 7K2
revmom28@gmail.com

A Voyage of Faith in Elmira



The Rev. Linda Bell dedicated the land in 2008 and used ribbon to symbolically connect everyone to the project.

By Kim Denstedt and Lee Coulman, co-chairs of the Board of Managers, Gale Presbyterian Church in Elmira, Ont.

Gale Presbyterian Church in Elmira, Ont., had a fire in its sanctuary February 26, but the congregation was applauding, not running for the exits!

The congregation watched as trustees and a past finance representative torched a copy of what had been a \$400,000 mortgage. As young people looked on in awe, the Rev. Reuben St. Louis encouraged them to approach the front, noting this is something they may never see again.

The burning of a church mortgage may be a rare event, and it is an exciting event when it happens, but Gale achieved this milestone after just 11 years. The congregation moved into its new church on Barnswallow Drive in 2012, following an eight-year planning and building phase dubbed the “Voyage of Discovery” and later the “Voyage of Faith.”

There have been a lot of changes over those 19 years,



Even the youngest members of the church became involved in making and selling apple pies at Gale.

including two search committees for new ministers, graduation ceremonies, the awe of baptisms, the sorrow of funerals, the welcoming of new members and, most recently, the fear of a global pandemic. Of course, the most frequent comment heard after members watched a visual presentation of pictures from throughout the years—“Wow, did we look young!”

The Rev. Linda Bell was Gale’s minister in 2003 when the congregation received an exciting offer: If members felt it was time to build a new church, a gift of \$1 million was available from an anonymous donor. In response, the Session of the day launched a year-long study in which members were invited to explore:

- What role should our church play in our community?
- How should we live our mission and demonstrate our faith?
- What did we see for Gale in the future?

The congregation was in an older building, built in 1868, with no room for parking or land for youth activities. But the building held a lot of memories, and emotional ties to the little church on Cross St. were strong. There were years of famine when congregations held it together, and years of feast when a new addition was built on the back, and a new pipe organ installed.

During the year of reflection, Gale members also researched township demographics and population projections, the availability of land, church growth and specific options that would be an alternative to moving.

The result of the exploration, led by a consulting firm, was a report that said members “have a high desire to be in a place that is attractive to new people and meet their needs.” The report summarized that the church had “poor visibility in the community (and) its present site seems unsuitable for expansion.” Finally, it said the church facilities “... while adequate and comfortable for the immediate needs of the congregation, will likely impede the organization’s ability to grow much beyond its present numbers.”

The next step was writing a business report to assess if the congregation could afford to build a new church.

The congregation developed a

vision with key points:

- A newly designed space-efficient church.
- An easy-to-find location visible to a growing population in Elmira.
- A mission that includes both the local community and the global community.
- A church that meets the faith development needs for all ages and stages.
- A welcoming faith community for people regardless of where they are on their spiritual journey.

The Waterloo-Wellington Presbytery approved the congregation’s decision in 2004 to move, and a steering committee was launched. The committee was broken into sub-committees of Land Purchase, Building Design, Program Needs, Finance and Fundraising, and Communication.

It took four long years before land was secured. In October of 2007, the land on the corner of Church St. and Barnswallow Drive became Gale’s. The congregation was looking at a total price tag of \$3.5 million for land and building—a far cry from the \$450 spent in 1868 for the church on Cross Street! The land was dedicated under sunny skies in 2008.

Fundraising continued throughout the process. Apple pies became a huge success, and the community still supports this fundraiser, which sells more than 1,000 unbaked pies every year. A little more than \$224,000 has been raised over the years through the sale of over 24,000 pies. Many events, including a pool-side gala, publishing a cookbook and selling gift cards were supported; members also pledged donations. Approval to sell the church manse came after determining more ministers were wanting to invest in home ownership rather than live in a manse.

Final financing was accomplished through a variety of means, including an anonymous loan (which forgave the interest when payment deadlines were met), a presbytery loan and the bank mortgage. The presbytery loan of \$70,000 is the only debt remaining at this time.

The sod-turning event took place under rainy skies in May of 2011, and a little more than a year later the congregation moved into its new building. A very moving final service at 2 Cross Street



Trustees Graham Parsons (left) and John Kendall (right) watch as Bob Soehner (centre) lights a copy of the bank mortgage during a special service at Gale Presbyterian Church in Elmira. Bob was a finance representative on the Steering Committee that guided the building project of a new church.



Making apple pies at Gale has involved many volunteers over many years. More than \$224,000 has been raised in the 17 years since the fundraiser was launched.



Gale’s sod turning took place under rainy skies about one year before the new church was completed. Bob Soehner, pictured in the white coat and hat, had the honour of burning the copy of the mortgage recently.

involved various members tasked with the responsibility of carrying church artifacts into the new space at 10 Barnswallow Drive, where the first service was celebrated on April 22, 2012.

The Rev. Bell remained with the congregation for another year before retiring. The Rev. Scott Sinclair became minister in 2014 and saw members through the worst months of the global pandemic in 2020 and 2021 before retiring. The Rev. Reuben St. Louis came to Gale in 2022.

At the mortgage burning service, the Rev. St. Louis noted the action of burning the mortgage has a sacramental quality because it is a symbol of something larger. He explained to the youth that the mortgage paper is a symbol of all the gifts, including time, talent and money offered over the years to reach this day. In the ancient tradition of our church, he said, we burn the paper as “our offering to

God” to thank God for those gifts.

The flame, he said, is representative of God’s spirit with us, reminding us it is God’s spirit that led us to this day, and the light is a promise God will remain with us into the future. The ashes that remain after the paper is burned remind us that without God, we are but dust. “So, in great humility we celebrate today acknowledging we did this with God’s grace.”

The smoke that is generated from the burning is a symbol, he noted, of transformation for the congregation, as we shift from paying for the past and focusing on the future.

In 2023, Gale looks to the future with excitement and humility, recognizing the sacrifices of not only the past 20 years, but the history of 155 years of many congregations praising within its church walls and walking toward the future, trusting in God’s spirit. God is good.

GATHERINGS



Oakridge Presbyterian in London, Ont., celebrated Easter Sunday 2023 with five baptisms and by welcoming 31 new members.



Beautiful quilts made by the K1/P2 (Knit One/Pray Too) group at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont., were donated to Soldiers Memorial Hospital in Orillia.



On Mission Awareness Sunday, (April 30, 2023), the service at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Pictou Landing, N.S., was led by the members of the Burning Bush Auxiliary of the Atlantic Mission Society (AMS). In the service, Clara Mackenzie was honoured with the Life Member award. Clara is a dedicated ruling elder, active in the life of the congregation, and an inspiration to all! Pictured (l to r): Burning Bush Auxiliary President Mary Condon, Clara Mackenzie and Dorothy Chisolm.



The combined Atlantic Mission Society (AMS) chapters of the East River Pastoral Charge presented Mission Awareness Sunday on April 30 at the Church Hall in Springville, N.S. Shown (left to right) are: Jo-Anne Smith, Edie Greene, Sharon MacDonald, Kaye Sharpe, Sue Hecimovitch and Marg Hogg.

GATHERINGS



The church garden at Wasaga Beach Community Presbyterian Church in Wasaga Beach, Ont., is a wonderful gathering spot for everyone. This beautiful garden has the honour of being one of the North American way stations for Monarch butterflies as they journey north from Mexico each year. It is also a popular site for church services, weddings, birthdays and social chats over a coffee.



Iona Presbyterian Church in Dartmouth, N.S., gathered with friends from the Presbytery of Halifax Lunenburg and representatives of the Halifax Regional Municipality to honour and celebrate the service and retirement of the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Chenard. Dr. Chenard served at Iona for 27 years and also volunteered in the role of chaplain with the RCMP and most recently with the HRM police.



Following three years of missing congregational gatherings, the men of First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, N.S., served a pancake and sausage supper for the congregation on Shrove Tuesday. The men, as always, enjoyed an evening of jovial fellowship in the kitchen, and provided the appreciative congregation an opportunity of shared laughter and community. Pictured are Gerry Davidson, Luke MacDonald, Peter MacKay, Munroe Fraser, Ira Grant and David Munro.



Women during afternoon fellowship at Knox Presbyterian Church in Oshawa, Ont., creating prayer shawls/afghans to bring comfort and warmth to those in need, far and wide. Pictured are (left to right) Aileen Leslie, Dianne Meulemeester, Sharon Sullivan, Loreen Gambell, Shirley Kedzierski.



The Presbyterian Church Building Corporation (PCBC) held its annual meeting of directors on April 14, 2023, in hybrid format: both virtually and in-person. Pictured, (left to right): Betty Kupeian (COO), Siggie Quickert, the Rev. Ian Morrison, Doris Eaglesham, George Gordon, Alex Grant, Dave Phillips, Sandra Steadman and Neil Coutts. Missing is the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald. PCBC helps congregations obtain the funds necessary to build or expand their facilities at favourable rates of interest by providing guarantees for loans. Since 1972, PCBC has also provided housing assistance to retired servants of the church.

GATHERINGS



A special ceremony was held during worship at Knox Presbyterian Church in Vankleek Hill, Ont., on Sunday, April 23, 2023. The Rev. Julia Aps-Douglas was inducted as associate minister of the congregation of which her husband, the Rev. James Douglas, is the minister. The Rev. Julia was also confirmed as a member of the congregation at the same time. In the top left photograph, the Rev. Julia (seated) is with Robin McRae, Clerk of Session (left), Nathalie Bercier, Elder, and the Rev. James Douglas, Minister. At the same service, three new elders of Knox Presbyterian Church were inducted. Pictured in the photo to the left, from left to right, are Rosemary Knox, Richard Berry, Lucy McRae and the Rev. James Douglas presiding. Finally, a photo was taken of the Session of Elders at Knox Vankleek Hill with the Rev. Julia Aps-Douglas, Associate Minister, and the Rev. James Douglas, Minister.



A special birthday celebration was held on April 6 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon, Ont., for Hazel Crawford and Jackie Fralick, the two most senior members of the Tea and Talk Mission Group. They are pictured here (at left) with cake, of course! They have been friends for years and share the same birth date. A local group of line dancers provided entertainment.

In the early years, the congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Morrisburg, Ont., was one of the few that used to follow the old Scottish custom of “dressing the church” for communion. Even though this practice has been discontinued, many members of Knox still like to “dress up” the church for the various seasons. We’re ready for Easter!



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket, Ont., is among the Newmarket churches that reach out into the community in love and service. Thanks to many church volunteers and community guests, the congregation held a Valentine's Day Fundraiser Dinner to support the twice monthly St. Andrew's Community Lunch and The Loft Street Outreach. In this photo, Heather Cromie, dinner coordinator (second from left), and Joel McPhee, chef (right), present The Loft's Mary Ann Proulx (centre) with a donation. Also pictured are Ward 5 Councillor Bob Kwapis (left), who attended the dinner, and the Rev. Robert Royal (back) of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. PHOTO CREDIT: GREG KING, *NewmarketToday*.

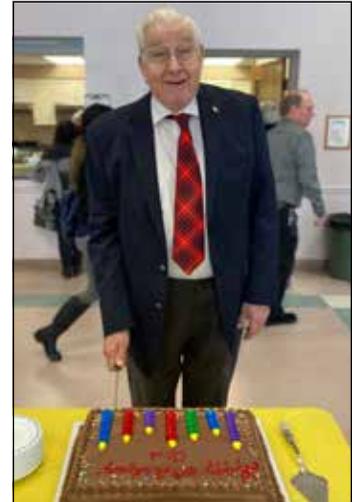


During the month of March 2023, St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta., collected new baby items for the local Pregnancy and Family Support Centre. The event was a huge success due to the generosity of so many in the congregation.

GATHERINGS



On June 12, 2022, Annie Isobel Tait was honoured for serving as organist and choir director for an incredible 70 years at Argyle Presbyterian Church Crinan in West Lorne, Ont. This astonishing achievement was recognized at Crinan's 161 Anniversary Service. Pictured are (left to right) Alan Carroll, Clerk of Session; the Rev. Ian Morrison, guest preacher; Annie Isobel Tait, organist; Wilma Boyce, pulpit supply; and the Rev. Jim Patterson, interim moderator.



On Sunday, Jan. 15, 2023, members of Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., celebrated the Rev. Clive Simpson's 85th birthday. The Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, a long-time friend, participated in the worship service. The congregation was pleased that the moderator of Oak Ridges Presbytery, the Rev. Joan Masterton, was able to attend the reception that followed.



Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sylvan Lake, Alta., was pleased to ordain two new elders and to welcome an inactive elder back into the fold on February 26, 2023. Pictured here are the congregation's elders with the Rev. Steve Webb. The two new elders are in the front row, centre.



To recognize the coronation celebrations of King Charles in early May, Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C., put a spin on "The Coronation Big Lunch." Coronation Boxed Lunches were prepared with a sampler of sweet and savoury English treats, including finger sandwiches, devilled eggs, currant scones with fresh marmalade, fruit cup, molasses cookies and, of course, shortbread. The box was finished off with Earl Grey tea, York Peppermint Patties and Jellied Fruits. Church members were encouraged to enjoy their lunch with friends outdoors on a park bench or patio. Proceeds from the Boxed Lunches have been directed to a congregational mission project in Madagascar, as one of a series of small fundraisers for Ivato Theological Seminary in Antananarivo, Madagascar.



About five years ago, Living Faith Community Presbyterian Church in Baxter, Ont., began the long process of refugee sponsorship, working through Presbyterian World Service & Development. They remained in contact with a family and single man throughout Covid, and can now happily say they have finally arrived! The congregation is thrilled to see them attending school, learning English and taking on jobs in such a short time. It is wonderful to have such an amazing, supportive congregation that has pulled together to make this happen.



The missionary group at Knox Presbyterian Church in Morrisburg, Ont., used some of the proceeds from the Art & Craft Show (where they provide soup, sandwiches and baking) to support mental health and Community Food Share Morrisburg.

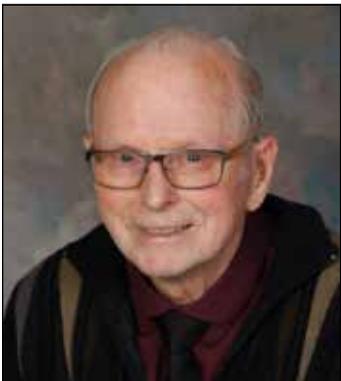
GATHERINGS



The congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont., is delighted to welcome the Rev. Shelly Chandler as the new Lead Minister (pictured above). She joined in the fall of 2022 and has done a wonderful job uplifting the congregation, both spiritually and in day-to-day lives. The congregation would also like to warmly acknowledge Barry Doyle who recently stepped down after 10+ years as Clerk of Session. He has been a tireless leader in the church community for many years! As a result, the congregation is equally pleased to announce that Sheila Thomson, a multi-generational member of St. Andrew's, has taken up the reins as the new Clerk of Session and they wish her much success in her new role.



The Service Club of Knox Presbyterian Church in Walkerton, Ont., recently celebrated their 80th anniversary. Formed in February 1943 with the purpose of engaging and supporting the younger women of the church, and also to be of service to the congregation, the Service Club continues today, preparing meals and supporting missions and projects.



The Rev. Bob Garvin celebrated the 60th anniversary of his ordination on May 10, 2023. We thank God for Bob's faithful ministry at Haney Presbyterian Church in Maple Ridge, B.C., and the wider church. His deep love for God and God's people is noteworthy. Thank you, Bob! God bless you and your work among us.



The Church of the Redeemer in Deseronto, Ont., held a special Joining Sunday on Feb. 19. The Rev. Kleinstaubler welcomed into the congregation 18 individuals who had become members of the church either by transfer or profession of faith. It was a very special Sunday in the life of this church. Each new member received a gift from the congregation. The service was followed by a lovely fellowship hour.



The members and adherents of Saint Columba Presbyterian Church in Saint John, N.B., dedicated a stained-glass window to the Glory of God and in loving memory of the Rev. Gordon Blackwell and his wife, Hazel Blackwell. The window recognizes the 44 years of faithful service they gave to Saint Columba and the ministry of Christ.



During the question session at our annual meeting at Runnymede Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., a small hand was raised. The seven-year-old wondered whether the church could do something to clean up all the garbage in our neighbourhood. In the appropriate Presbyterian way, the request was moved, seconded, adopted and referred to the Board for implementation of this little girl's idea. The result was that the church joined the Clean Toronto Together campaign, which coincided with Earth Day. Social media and local advertising drew members of the congregation and neighbourhood to participate in a pleasant afternoon's work, picking up debris for blocks around the church. Many neighbours approached the teams to say hello and to express appreciation for the work they were doing.

GATHERINGS



A wonderful St. Patrick's Day and "Welcome to Spring" lunch and silent auction were enjoyed by the congregation at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church and the local community in Orillia, Ont.



The Gathering Place congregation in Port Colborne, Ont., waited two years to welcome an Afghan family who left their Turkish refugee camp just days after the earthquake in the south of the country. Getting to know them has been a wonderful experience...and they are wonderful cooks!



Bethel Presbyterian Church in Pictou Landing, N.S., celebrated 150 years with a service on Sunday, February 26. Guest speaker Fergie MacKay (pictured cutting the anniversary cake) last year published the book "A History of Bethel Church: Pictou Landing, Nova Scotia." As well, some of the ladies from the congregation dressed in clothing from a different era, including hats! There was an excellent turnout, and a wonderful time of fellowship followed the service. The women wearing hats are (left to right) Mary Alice Vacheresse, Diane Wallace, Joni Roper, Dot Jenkins, Kathy Graham, Mary Agnes Condon, Donna Thompson, Linda Sangster, Robin Langille. Also pictured is worship leader Sam Graham with elders Bert Gordon and Fred Sangster, Clerk of Session Bill MacPherson and (seated) elder Clara Mackenzie.



Thornhill Presbyterian Church in Thornhill, Ont., celebrated their annual Great Day event on May 28. The event is used to raise funds to support worthy causes, either local, national or international. This year, Maria Carmona, Program Coordinator at PWS&D, gave a presentation on the social justice and gender inclusion work she oversees in Pakistan and neighbouring countries. She is pictured (centre) with the Rev. Dr. Heather Vais (right) as well as Abel Pandey, chair of the Stewardship Committee at Thornhill.



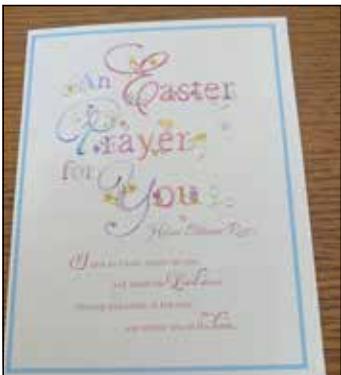
On March 19, Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church (VAPC) in Calgary, Alta., celebrated their first PIE Sunday with their church partners from The Road Church (TRC). The Road, a seeker-friendly Christian Reformed church, began worshipping in VAPC's sanctuary this year and the two churches have been partnering, based on their common values as affirming, community-focussed congregations. The PIE event was a combined service. PIE stands for "Public Intentional and Explicit." It's an acronym used by many affirming churches to describe their position on the full inclusion of people who identify LGBTQI+ in the life and work of their congregations. PIE represents a way to celebrate a congregation's affirming values and to lift up the stories and experiences of those who are LGBTQI+. The service was a great success as guest speaker Brynne Nelson, along with ministers and lay leaders from both VAPC and TRC, took part. Jess Andrews of The Road led the children's lesson. Those in attendance heard a powerful message, sang together, prayed together and shared communion. Following the service, everyone was invited to stay for fellowship, and the crowd tried to work their way through 26 pizzas and 30+ pies—another reason we call it a PIE service!



GATHERINGS



On April 30, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Québec City, Que., hosted its first Board Games Afternoon. A special thanks goes out to everyone who brought in board games! There were games suitable for every age group, so that no one felt left out. According to the comments, it was a great success, and people can't wait for the next one. We see this as a way of building community, and we are opening it up to the wider community surrounding us. Pictured playing chess are Jozef Hatvany and the Rev. Charmilla Ireland; playing Snakes and Ladders are the Rev. Katherine Burgess, Sophie Sharpe, Olga Grayvoronska and Aurora Irakoze; thinking hard over their game clue is Katherine Bleeker and Kandace Walsh-Burgess; and with her Cranium bonsai tree creation is France Dupuis.



Members of St. David's Presbyterian Church in Toney River, N.S., packed Easter gifts for the people in the Toney River community as part of the congregation's Easter outreach.



Kensington Presbyterian Church in Montreal, Que., held a special Shrove Tuesday pancake dinner—their first in-person event since the start of Covid. As well, a special celebration was held to recognize Peggy Wegrich's 100th birthday.

On Earth Day, April 23, First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., along with other community groups, dodged the rain and took part in the Brockville Community Cleanup. The goal of the Community Cleanup is to prepare local parks and playgrounds for summer fun and activities. The First Church team collected and filled bags with leaves and yard waste, picked up garbage and recycling, raked the sand pit, cleaned the play structure, and had a lot of fun in the process! Following the cleanup, the team gathered at the church and enjoyed cookies and hot chocolate. Even though they were a little tired and achy, everyone knew they had accomplished something important for their community and those who live in it!

GATHERINGS



On Easter Sunday, the members of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Westville, N.S., surprised their minister, the Rev. Gail Johnson-Murdock, when she arrived for worship. Gail had shared with a few members that for a future Easter she'd love to do an Easter bonnet Sunday. The members of the church got busy, and Gail walked into the sanctuary with everyone sporting an Easter bonnet/hat. The Clerk of Session even got in on the fun!



Thornhill Presbyterian Church in Thornhill, Ont., was pleased to confirm seven youths at their recent Easter Sunday service. They attended an intensive two-month long classroom study session, preparing them for continued service in our church and beyond. They are pictured with their teachers, the Rev. Dr. Heather Vais and Abel Pandey.



The members and adherents of Saint Columba Presbyterian Church in Saint John, N.B., gathered for the congregation's final group meeting of the New Beginnings Program. The program was developed to help the church discern God's call for their future and create a plan to move forward. New Beginnings is a discernment program designed to empower congregations with an assessment and reflection process in order to be intentional about discerning God's call for future mission and crafting an implementation plan for action. It is a period of renewal and optimism for the church.



This spring, Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre in Puslinch, Ont., welcomed a new farm manager and 10 beautiful lambs! Gillian Murphy will lead the next stage of expansion as the farm grows to include several new acres of vegetable production, more than 100 chickens and 25 Scottish Soay sheep, used to control invasive plant species on the property. This year for the first time, guests were invited into the barn for "lamb therapy," which included hand feeding and cuddling the new arrivals. Every guest who stays at Crieff Hills is invited to encounter God's creation in a new way, which also honours Col. J.B. Maclean's original vision when he donated the property to The Presbyterian Church in Canada at the time of his death in 1950.



At First Presbyterian Church in Brandon, Man., it was suggested that during Lent this year, rather than giving something up they GIVE to advance the work of Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D). A large Lenten coin box and smaller boxes were used to collect money during Lent. Nearly \$700 was sent to PWS&D for Turkey-Syria Earthquake Relief. Zack Southcombe and Savannah Falk-Hamilton conducted the readings.

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GATHERINGS



On Sunday, March 19, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., hosted a special Iranian New Year or “Nowruz” celebration after worship. Nowruz is a festival based on the Iranian Solar Hijri calendar, on the spring equinox.



Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., undertook a number of initiatives to support the local food bank. The first event was a Pancake Breakfast hosted by the Mission and Outreach Committee on Saturday, March 22. We were pleased to have Mayor David West join us. During Holy Week on Tuesday, April 4, the Rev. Robert Hayashi and a small team of members from the congregation volunteered at the Food Bank to help stock shelves, breaking down sugar, tea, etc., into smaller portions. An Easter food drive resulted in a generous number of non-perishable food items, along with financial contributions that added up to \$809.40.



The theme for Lent at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont., was Love. During Lent, the congregation gathered 70 sets of pajamas for children and 40 pairs of comfy pants for adults. The donations went to “Uplifting Blessings,” an Orillia-based charity for local families in need.



St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., got into the hockey playoff spirit!



Above are pictures from a Lunch & Learn with “King Julez,” which was a hybrid event that took place at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., on May 6. King Julez, also known as Julian Munro, discussed the history and spirituality of drag. Julian is a Master of Divinity and Master of Pastoral Studies student at Emmanuel College.

GATHERINGS



Easter Morning Sunrise Service with Point Edward Presbyterian Church and St. Paul's Anglican Church in Point Edward, Ont.



St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta., honoured their many volunteers on the Sunday of Volunteer Appreciation Week. These are the folks who make everything possible, and while the congregation celebrates them year-round, on this day, there was cake!

The Cairn Coffee House was a hybrid social event that took place at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., on April 22. The Cairn Family of Camps are Christian summer camps owned and operated by The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

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GATHERINGS



The congregation of Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., was pleased to welcome the 147th Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. Robert (Bob) Faris, who led worship on Sunday, March 12. There was an opportunity to spend time with him during fellowship after the morning's service. The congregation was appreciative that he, along with Sue Senior, Elder from Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, led an interactive workshop entitled "Who is Welcome?" on Saturday, March 11. It was a very educational afternoon, and the participants were grateful for Bob and Sue sharing their journey with us.



During the month of February, a special memorial Food Drive was organized in memory of the late Rev. Samuel Priestley, a minister at St. Andrew's for many years. The picture at left shows his widow, Carol Priestley, presenting a cheque and non-perishable goods to the local director of the Markham Food Bank. The initiative was a joint venture between the St. Andrew's congregation and the 2nd Markham Scouts. Sam was an avid scouter for many years. Also pictured (at right) is Rob Lewis, one of our elders and scout leader.



On April 26, the Presbytery of New Brunswick was pleased to celebrate the appointment of the Rev. Darryl Levy (centre, with keys around his neck) as transitional minister for a two-year term with the congregation of Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fredericton, N.B. Moderator of Presbytery, Marlene Phillips (second from right) presided; the Rev. Dr. Philip Lee (far right) preached the sermon, entitled "We Have a Great High Priest," and the Rev. Dr. Basil Lowery (third from right) provided the Charge to the Minister and the congregation. The Clerk of Presbytery and Interim Moderator of Saint Andrew's, the Rev. Kent Burdett, (far left, back row), played a key role in organizing this service. All enjoyed a time of fellowship in the church hall immediately following this well-attended service.



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Time for a Just Transition

By Katharine Sisk, Justice Ministries

At the launch of the most recent Synthesis Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, “We have never been better equipped to solve the climate challenge, but we must move into warp speed climate action now. We don’t have a moment to lose.”

No matter how we parse questions of which actions are needed and who should provide leadership for these changes (government? industry? communities?), the science is clear that urgent social and economic change is required now to avoid catastrophic climate change.

There is global consensus about what is driving the crisis and the threshold for mitigating the worst impacts (keep warming under 1.5°C). Where governments, industries and communities diverge are deciding on, and implementing, the pathways and timelines for reducing consumption of fossil fuels. In place of binding international agreements to reduce emissions, there are non-binding agreements with government-determined emission targets. Most countries—Canada among them—are not meeting even these targets. Voluntary regimes have failed to turn the tide thus far and, as Guterres notes, procrastination time has run out.

Our present society and economy are reliant on levels of fossil fuel consumption that are both unsustainable and drive our climate crisis. We need to transition to a low-carbon, more sustainable economy accompanied by sustainable societal practices and norms. How do we do that? And how do we do that *justly* when our societies are not structured for equality? This is where calls for “a just transition” come in.

What is a just transition and what does it look like in practice?

A “just transition” is a process of economic and societal changes that moves society away from fossil fuel consumption, while supporting the needs of people whose livelihoods are affected by those changes. That means those in the fossil fuel industry, for example—but also those most vul-



nerable to climate damage.

We have examples we can learn from in Canada and in other countries where just transition plans have been used. Canada, for instance, plans to phase out coal-fired electricity generation by 2030 (in line with international commitments) and implement a Just Transition Program for affected communities and workers. This impacts several thousand workers and their families in four provinces (Alberta, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan). A federal task force was struck to consult with stakeholders to assess needs and make recommendations to the government about the phase-out process, including organizing alternative employment options, retraining and social benefits for affected regions. Unsurprisingly, there were options that worked but also limitations and challenges with the process. What is critical to a just transition is the consistent application of guiding principles that are clear, transparent, rights-based, collaborative and accountable, along with flexible processes that can adapt to the unique needs of different groups and communities. (If you are interested in learning more, check out Justice Ministries’ webinar “Mak-

ing the Just Transition” at youtu.be/3k9JCgG0LE.)

What does an emphasis on justice mean?

A just transition builds in opportunities to transform ingrained, society- and system-wide inequalities. It cannot mean justice for *some* people—it must mean justice for *all* people. The impacts of climate change fall most heavily on those already made vulnerable by systemic injustices, especially impacting Indigenous, Black and poor communities. A recent study reports that climate change will exacerbate “the health and socio-economic inequities already experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, including respiratory, cardiovascular, water- and foodborne, chronic and infectious diseases, as well as financial hardship and food insecurity” (*Health of Canadians in a Changing Climate* (2022) changingclimate.ca). If systemic injustice has already compromised the health and well-being of entire groups of people, how much more difficult is it to survive and recover from exposure to climate-induced disasters? Even as this article was written (mid-May 2023), thousands of people in

Alberta, including four thousand Indigenous people, have been evacuated and Alberta had declared a State of Emergency due to wildfires—a situation that will only worsen as the climate continues to warm.

Many of the just transition processes that have been tried, whether in Canada or elsewhere, are at a fraction of the scale necessary to address the climate crisis. There are, for example, hundreds of thousands of people in Canada still employed directly in the fossil fuel industry or in supporting industries. There are experiences we can learn from, but the longer we wait to enact just transition processes, the greater the toll the climate crisis will take, both on creation (including people) and on the economy. The Stern Review, published in 2006, was a landmark investigation of the economic cost of climate change and conclusively found that “the benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting” (Stern Review, Summary of Conclusions, vi). Almost two decades later, this remains true.

Who will lead?

The question of who should take global leadership to reduce

emissions is in deadlock between countries that are responsible for the most emissions cumulatively over time (since the 1700s) and countries whose emissions have historically been lower but are ballooning in response to contemporary industrial development and population growth (ourworldindata.org/contributed-most-global-co2). When I look at my son, now 4, I wonder what the generation of his children will make of that deadlock, and what they will think of us, today. What legacy do we want to leave them? We are not powerless. Collectively, we can work to make the changes needed.

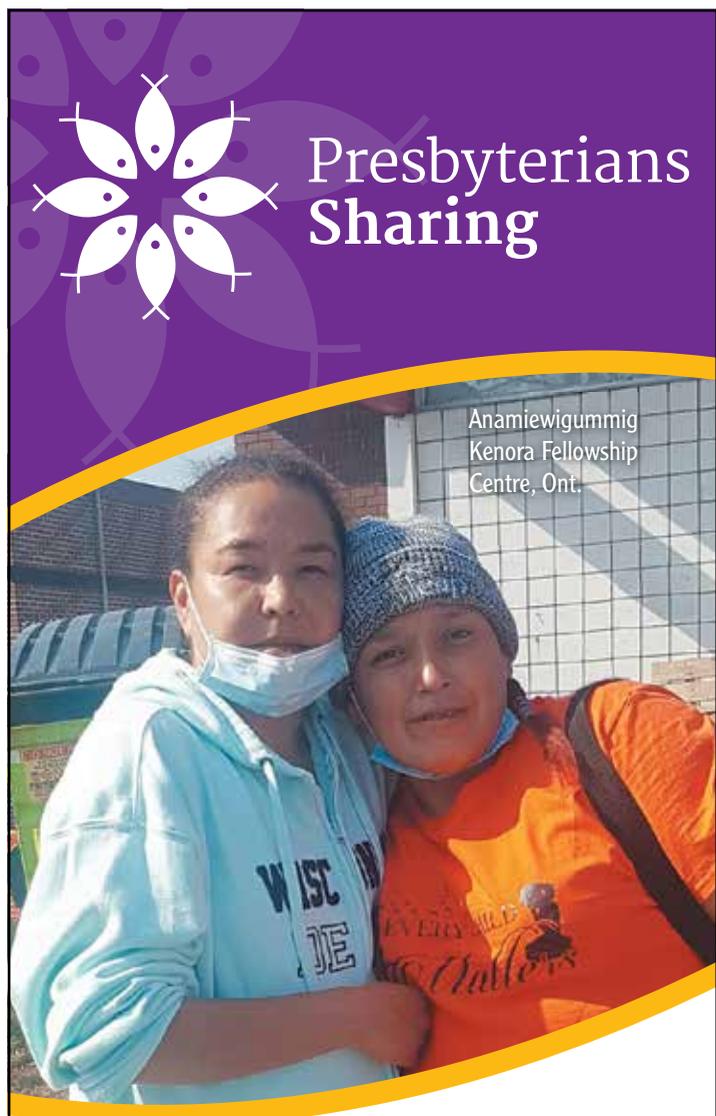
What you can do:

- Write to federal officials expressing your support for prioritizing just transition policies. Letter templates are at presbyterian.ca/resources/advocacy
- Connect with local sustainable city/community movements and learn about their work and priorities. How can you support them?
- Within your own community groups and networks, be an advocate for fostering behaviours and policies that reduce fossil fuel consumption.



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Transformative Justice Then and Now

By Allyson Carr, Justice Ministries

Like many other denominations and faith groups, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been examining how it can address systemic racism—both within society more broadly and within the church. One element of the PCC’s actions—stemming from an acknowledgement that in order to really address systemic racism one must not only identify and reject racism but continually and actively work against it—is to develop an Anti-racism Covenant. A multi-racial group to guide that process is in the midst of being drawn together and will likely begin its work over the summer.

Given this work, I was not surprised to come across a resource on racism published by the World Council of Churches that someone had left on my desk recently. It is called *Transformative Justice: Being Church and Overcoming Racism*. Examining it, one can see over its 52 pages that it draws extensively on scripture as well as on statements from a variety of ecumenical sources. The topics addressed in different sections are timely and speak to our present context as relevant issues the church needs to acknowledge and face. For instance, when introducing what transformative justice in the context of overcoming racism means, it has section titles like “Inclusive Community”; “Reparation and Restitution”; “Healing and Reconciliation”; “Imbalance of Relationships and Power.” I was glad to see that it contains an entire section toward the end on “Strategies to Confront and Overcome Racism” and that it closes with a vision of what the fruits of racial justice might actually look like when achieved. With a glossary of terms for clarity and an entire opening theological framework on racism as sin, it felt like just the guidebook that might be useful for the journey the church is on.

The quick page-through of its contents had me excited to sit down and read it, seeing how we might draw on such a timely work. I was surprised I had not heard that it was coming out, though, so I checked the publication date, which was printed in small type right on the cover. Only then did I realize it had been published in 2004—a full nineteen years ago now. This guidebook had been available for nearly two



decades. A pain settled deeper in my stomach.

The fact that it was written so long ago and yet remains so timely in its topics should be distressing. The church has been saying since at least the early seventies (and in many quarters, long before that) that racism is incompatible with the gospel (A&P 1972, pp. 269-270, 59). When the PCC itself adopted such language in 1972, it was affirming previous statements of ecumenical and international origin; namely, the 1954 Evanston Assembly statement, materials from the 1966 Geneva Conference on Church and Society, the 1968 Uppsala Assembly statement, and a statement from the 183rd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church. The problem of racism—which is of course a problem all over the globe and not solely here in Canada—has been identified, documented, acknowledged, condemned ecumenically and internationally with commitments to change. Some progress has no doubt been made, and yet...here we are in 2023 with systemic racism still alive and well within our society and institutions, including the church. This despite the dedicated, hard work of decades of courageous people, frequently led by the very communities systemic racism targets.

Something (almost certainly a variety of things) is collectively slowing or stopping the church as the body of Christ from addressing a sin the church has acknowledged within itself and admitted is contrary to the gospel and to the mind and will of Christ. Col-

lectively, we need to identify the supports and powers that are keeping systemic racism in place and recognize the barriers to transformative racial justice, so that we can dismantle them. Otherwise, as a church, we remain in a position that is actively contrary to the gospel.

All who belong to the body of Christ are called to work against racism, to become anti-racist. As this article has detailed, this work is not new and so it is helpful to draw strength and momentum from the cloud of witnesses who have spoken before today, and to learn from them. There will be several measures taken, intended to support this mission to address racism before the General Assembly this year. The work of the Anti-racism Covenant group will begin soon. There will be more information coming out, and resources to learn about and engage in to reinforce anti-racism as this work proceeds.

There is much to do and there are many people already engaged in it. Since systemic racism is legion, the work is varied and results will not happen overnight. There will be reports and recommendations in the coming year as the Anti-racism Covenant is drafted and as the PCC examines its structures, policies and practices to locate if and where there are barriers. Meanwhile, to learn more about the PCC’s history on speaking and working against racism and to find resources that are already available, see the anti-racism page of our Social Action Hub at presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/anti-racism.

“A Moral Imperative”

Church Leaders Call for Clarity and Honesty in Defence of International Law and Human Rights in Palestine-Israel

By Callie Long
Communications Office

The present complex geo-political crisis in Palestine-Israel results from fixed, deep-rooted and historically political, social and religious apprehensions, which continue to be a grave concern for the faith-based community.

Given the significant influence of religion in the region and pressing concerns about the state-perpetrated and oppressive acts of intolerance enacted

against Palestinians by the present Israeli government, a delegation of leaders representing several Canadian churches, including The Presbyterian Church in Canada, met with Members of Parliament (MPs) in Ottawa at the end of April to discuss the role of faith institutions in the ongoing conflict. Calling for action and focused on raising awareness and building consensus, the Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon, principal emerita of Knox College; Bishop Susan Johnson, national bishop of the



A barrier in Palestine. PHOTO CREDIT: WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; the Rt. Rev. Carmen Lansdowne, moderator of the United Church of Canada; and Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, first met with MPs on April 26 and then participated in an in-person and live-streamed panel discussion hosted by St. Paul's University on April 27.

After an encouraging interaction with several parliamentarians over the course of the visit, some of the leaders were surprised and somewhat discour-

aged by an exchange with one MP, who was quoted during the panel discussion as saying that “Canada has no voice” because, as a country, we have little economic or military clout. To this, the Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon’s rejoinder was: “We have a moral imperative.”

Not speaking up is not an option in Dorcas’s and the other leaders’ books, “Regardless of whether we have a solution.” Dorcas added: “There is a reason to speak up, and the reason is [that] it’s morally right to speak

up,” given the dire human rights violations Palestinians face daily.

As Bishop Johnson noted: “This is [also] one of the moments that we learn that we are stronger together. We are stronger when we speak with one voice. We are stronger when we work together.”

Watch the whole panel discussion between the four church leaders and other experts, including the co-founder of Al-Haq, Jonathan Kuttab, on YouTube at youtube.com/watch?v=-cZARZ8R2f8&t=204s.

Congregational Records in the Digital Age

By Kim Arnold and Nicole D’Angela,
Presbyterian Church Archives

In the digital age, many of us have switched to keeping records electronically. We type up minutes, upload photographs online and work through finances on Excel. This is appealing as digital records save space in the office, can be accessed remotely, are searchable, and can easily be copied and shared. Additionally, file names can help you locate a document quickly and passwords can be used to add an extra layer of protection on your most sensitive documents. While enjoying all the perks of digital records, it is important to also consider how to organize and manage them efficiently and effectively.

Structuring Digital Records

Files can be organized using folders and sub-folders to group related records. You may arrange your records by congregational bodies (Board of Managers, Board of Trustees, Session, etc.). When structuring your records this way, you can include sub-folders to further separate the files into the years that they were created and/or the type of records within the



committee. For example, a Session folder may have the sub-folder labeled with the year 2021 and then further sub-folders for minutes, correspondences, and reports. Organizing documents by year is important because it helps implement a retention schedule (presbyterian.ca/congregation-records). Overall, this structure assists in quickly locating and recognizing digital records.

File naming, specifically the use of naming conventions, can also help manage documents and provide a preview of their content. A naming convention is an agreed upon structure and standardization to ensure all who accesses them can quickly and easily iden-

tify the content of the document. When formulating a naming convention, consider the following: ensure all users understand the same terms and short forms; use names that reflect the content of the document; include a creation date (i.e., Session Minutes—December 2020); and, if your document has a draft of a final version, include that in the file name (i.e., *Annual Report, 2021—DRAFT*; *Annual Report, 2021—FINAL*).

Backing Up Digital Records

Accidents happen and sometimes important files can be lost or damaged. With digital records, it is easy to back them up by making a copy and storing them in a separate location. It is recommended that a USB or external hard drive is purchased to perform regular backups. This device should be stored away from your computer, in a secure and ideally offsite location. It is important to consider durability, reliability and storage capacity when shopping for a suitable device.

Printing Out Digital Records

Many people are more comfort-

able working with paper records, so they opt to print out their digital files. Although this will ultimately take up more office space and may lead to record duplication, there are steps to avoid these dilemmas. To begin with, delete any digital records that no longer serve a purpose once printed. You may choose to maintain both a physical and digital copy of the record. To ensure that the contents reflect one another, if changes are made to the physical copy, they should also be made on the digital copy. Similarly, if changes are made to the digital copy, a new printed copy should replace the previous version.

Preserving Emails

Emails are a heavily used form of communication that are often forgotten about when applying records management. It is recommended that any important attachments that come in via email are saved onto your computer or printed and properly filed. This should also be applied to any significant correspondence, especially if it relates to policy or procedure.

Transferring Digital Records to the

Archives (dissolved congregations only)

If your congregation is closing, it is important to remember to deposit your digital records along with the hardcopies. This includes any hard drives, USBs, CDs or floppy disks that contain documents or photographs that are listed in the dissolved congregation guide (see presbyterian.ca/dissolving-congregation) and do not exist in paper form. The Archives should have the most updated version of your documents; duplicates are not required.

As per the Assembly Council’s report to General Assembly 2022, it is recommended: *That congregations be urged to review their digital files (e.g., typed minutes, photos) and apply records management standards to them as they would physical records and frequently back them up to an external hard drive or USB, which should be stored in a secure location (Recommendation ASC-004, A&P 2022).*

Questions?

For more information, contact the Archives at 1-800-619-7301 or email archives@presbyterian.ca.

An Interview with Jeanie Lee

By the Rev. Gordon Timbers, participant of the EAPPI program in 2016 and member of the International Affairs Committee. Gordon is also a member of a Canada-wide ecumenical and interfaith team of people advocating for Canada to appoint a special envoy to address the treatment of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Welcome home, Jeanie! You have recently returned from your second placement with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). Could you say what the EAPPI is, and why you participated?

The EAPPI is a World Council of Churches initiative that sends people from churches and countries around the world for three months to Palestine and Israel. Volunteers are trained to be a protective presence and make observations about the human rights situation

of Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation. The Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) also connect with Israeli peace groups working alongside Palestinians to end the occupation.

In November 2022, our team attended the EAPPI's 20th anniversary celebration in Jerusalem. The program was created in response to the request by the Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem to send an international presence into the country. Twenty years later, the need is still there.

EAs are often the first to respond to incidents of human rights violations by Israeli soldiers or armed settlers. Teams of four or five in each placement monitor, report and provide a protective presence from harassment or attack by offering accompaniment for school children, shepherds, farmers and others.

Also very important is our advocacy work when we go back to our home countries. The Canadian members of the team serving in

Bethlehem (an EA from the United Church of Canada) managed to have a meeting at the Representative Office of Canada to the Palestine Authority in Ramallah. As a result, Representative Officer David Da Silva and Charles De Bock, a political officer, visited Bethlehem to witness the situation in the Aida Refugee Camp and the restrictions imposed by the Bethlehem separation wall.

I felt blessed and want to thank the PCC for the opportunity to be an EA twice in Bethlehem. My first EA trip was in 2009 and was an eye-opening experience to witness life under the military occupation. I was grateful to be back with the people whose lives are so difficult and who always appreciated us for being there.

How have things changed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) from your first placement in 2009?

My first observation was the large increase of Israeli illegal settlements in the Bethlehem region. There are now 22 settlements encircling the city. The change was quite shocking to see. Some settlements are like huge cities, with high-rise apartment buildings and major roadways that are restricted for Israeli-use only.

Conditions of life in the refugee camps are not much different than before, except for some progress on a new school building built by United Nations in Aida Camp. But the night raids and armed clashes inside and outside the camps by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) seemed much more frequent. The Israeli military sends groups of newly drafted soldiers to raid refugee camps as part of their training. Many residents are having nightmares due to the raids at night four or five times a week. The people are frightened by the use of tear gas, sound bombs, shooting live ammunition, home invasions, arrests of children and occasional killings. It is sad and frustrating for the EAs because we cannot do much more than to be there with the people and try to find help from organizations such as the Red Cross, UN, other international aid organizations and even from Israeli peace activists.

Another change from 2009 was the layout of Checkpoint 300, the foot-traffic entry point between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. There



Jeanie Lee in Palestine during an EAPPI trip.

is now a heavy presence of digital technology surveillance devices, including the use of facial recognition for Palestinians wanting to go into Jerusalem for work or worship. These innovations have been criticized by Palestinian and even Israeli activists as another form of humiliation and systemic human rights violations.

Bethlehem has a special place in the hearts and minds of Christians. We all know the words of the Christmas carol: "O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie." How would you describe the current reality of life there?

I love the imagery of the Christmas carol, but the reality of life is far different. Instead of sweet and peaceful sleep, many Palestinian families are going through continuing nightmares because of what is happening in the refugee camps inside the city, and in the wider area, house demolitions, land confiscation and daily harassment from extreme and often armed settlers. Bethlehem is in Area A, supposedly under Palestinian administrative and police controls, according to the terms of the 1995 Oslo Agreement, but the city and surrounding area of the West Bank of the Jordan River are under military occupation and, in reality, IDF activities are unrestricted.

It was good to see that after Covid many tour buses were coming through the Car Checkpoint, which is a different entrance from the CP300. But many gift shop owners say that there are fewer customers than before. One prob-

lem is that tourists are unnecessarily afraid. I had two occasions of visitors asking me if it was safe to walk on the street as they had been warned by their Israeli tour guides about the possibility of terrorist attacks. The reality is the opposite of what they were being told. Most of the guided tourists coming to Bethlehem are visiting without knowing the reality of the occupation.

One of our EA team's important duties was to monitor the safety of school children, as Israeli soldiers would often harass and intimidate them, sometimes even firing tear gas and sound bombs to scare them while on their way to school, which is itself a form of terrorism. We monitored two to three schools three times a week to help ensure the safety of students and their teachers, who were always grateful for our support.

We also provided accompaniment and protective presence for local shepherds and their flocks. Settlers from the illegal settlements, like Ma'al Amos, located on hilltops and built on Palestinian land, would often come down and harass us, while soldiers arrived by military jeep to order us, at gunpoint, to leave.

These incidents are increasing, and even include physical harm to shepherds and their animals. It was devastating to witness shepherds losing their pregnant sheep due to stillbirths, which was cruel in itself and also a significant economic loss for their families. The villagers have nowhere to turn for help or to complain about these



A demolished house Al Walaja, Palestine.

Continued from page 34

terrorist acts committed by the settlers and soldiers. Kisan is one of many small and remote villages, with the EAs the only international team offering protective presence. The community deeply appreciated our efforts and provided us with hospitality on our visits.

As an EA, I recall being told by residents in the OPT that, bad as things are for them, their situation would be even worse without the presence of human rights monitors. How effective is the EAPPI and similar organizations?

We were the only human rights monitors on the scene most of the time. Since Covid, EAPPI was the first observer group to return. I cannot imagine how the people inside Bethlehem suffered during the pandemic, on top of the occupation, which meant more restrictions on movement and desperate economic difficulties. According to Mohammad, our driver and co-worker, he was very grateful that the EAs came back right after the pandemic in early 2022. I was overwhelmed when people remembered me by name when I returned 13 years later. The people always welcomed and thanked us for being with them. They know we do not have much power to stop the occupation, but being there to accompany, listen and advocate for their situation is always deeply appreciated.

News reports from Israel describe the protests against the current far right government. How are the policies of this government affecting living conditions in the OPT and the prospects for peace and reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians?

According to the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac of the Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, where I worshipped, the situation seems to be deteriorating rapidly. The new extremist government has destroyed every sign of hope. The previous government was just as extremist, but this new one is more public in what it is saying and doing. Palestinians are expressing a sense of hopelessness that the ongoing oppression of military activity and settlement expansion will only continue to worsen.

At this year's General Assembly, representatives of the Parents Circle–Families Forum received the Cutting Edge of Mission Award. This organization of parents from Israeli and Palestinian communities is composed of parents whose loved ones have died in the conflict related to the Occupation. They work to promote reconciliation and peace. What do you know of this and other organizations in Israeli civil society who advocate for an end to the Occupation?

I learned about the Parents Circle

– Families Forum during one of the lectures in my mid-term orientation. I was deeply touched by the narrative of an Israeli father who lost his daughter during her army duty. He searched for answers about her tragic death and was filled with hatred, seeking ways to take revenge. He found the PCFF, a group of bereaved families from both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which led him to change his mind and pursue peaceful processes of reconciliation. His testimony was powerful and touched us deeply. When I returned to Bethlehem, I initiated a visit for our team to the PCFF's Palestinian office in Beit Jalah, near Bethlehem.

On December 26, 2022, we had a meeting with Osama Abu-Ayash, Co-General Director of the Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), with the assistance of Salam Sbitan, who translated our conversation. Osama had lost four family members to the Israeli occupation, including his grandfather, father, and two brothers-in-law. In his twenties, he was wrongfully imprisoned by the Israeli military and was subjected to daily torture, resulting in severe weight loss and illness. After his release, he initially sought revenge, but instead found the PCFF and changed his focus to promoting reconciliation and peace. His story, along with that of the Israeli father we had previously heard, deeply touched and inspired us.

Osama's work involves speaking to groups of Israeli students and other groups about the reality of the occupation, and he expressed surprise at how many of them were unaware of the situation. We were grateful for the opportunity to meet with the PCFF members and to learn from their experiences.

During my previous time with EAPPI, I contacted "Machsom (Checkpoint) Watch" for assistance at Checkpoint 300. They were one of the most influential Israeli human rights organizations. As a group of Jewish mothers and grandmothers, they were often able to handle many incidents at the checkpoints by interceding with the young Israeli soldiers on duty. However, Hanna Barag, one of the leaders, is now 88 years old, and the massive technology changes have reduced opportunities for interaction.

"Breaking the Silence" is one of the most active Israeli organizations that I encountered during my time in the region. It is an organization of veterans who have served in the Israeli military whose goal is to expose the Israeli public to the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories. Former Israeli soldiers who belong to "Breaking the Silence" lead tours in the city of Hebron several times a month. During these tours, they break their silence on their military service in the occupied territories and ex-

plore the harsh consequences of the policy of separation and the military presence in the city. It was a highlight of my experience to walk with the Israeli Breaking the Silence team and learn about the painful reality of life in the city of Hebron.

Why do you think it is important for The Presbyterian Church in Canada to continue to send participants in the EAPPI? Why would you encourage individual Canadian Presbyterians to participate as EAs?

The PCC strongly believes that peace cannot be achieved without justice. The concept of protective presence is rooted in the belief that an international presence has a positive influence and can help prevent or reduce instances of human rights violations. Canadians can use their voices and presence to accompany their Palestinian brothers and sisters, and relating firsthand accounts of human rights abuses can be powerful in advocating for just peace.

The Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac observes that while many churches pray for both sides and for peace, they may unknowingly contribute to the oppression by not challenging Israel on its human rights abuses, breaking international law, and treating the conflict as if it were a conflict between equals. This enables and empowers the occupier, rather than promoting justice and peace.



Children in Palestine.

Training Program for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

The Joint Christian Committee for Social Service in Lebanon (JCC) offers an electronics/computer training program for Palestinian refugees that is making a difference in the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in Lebanon. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been a long-time partner with the JCC and has supported this program for four years.

Located at the Sabra/Shatila refugee camp, the electronics/computer program has been designed to serve Palestinian refugees, as well as local impoverished residents, and has recently expanded to include Syrian refugees.

Those taking part consider it a lifeline to a valuable training opportunity,

which will allow them to build a more sustainable future for themselves and their families by finding a position within a job market that too often discriminates. Without such an opportunity, the fear is that some would fall into the trap of being influenced by radicalized groups or end up a part of a growing drug problem.

Life in Lebanon has become extremely difficult for many. With the ongoing economic crisis, the deteriorating value of local currency and increasing inflation, the cost of living has risen dramatically. Many families need their youth to help sustain the family's income.

The JCC's electronics/computer program has both theoretical and

practical components. Students attend five days a week for six hours of training a day. It's a nine-month course that concludes with a final exam and, if the student is successful, a certificate is awarded that is stamped by the Ministry of Vocational Training. Until now, most of the students who take part have had very limited opportunities for training and skills development, with most not progressing beyond intermediate-level schooling.

The subject matter of the program continues to evolve to meet the needs of changing times. A new area of focus is centred on installing satellite dishes and fixing cell phones.

Almost all graduates are able to find employment after the program, and some even go on to more advanced-level training. Last year, 12 students graduated, and a small ceremony was held to celebrate their accomplishments. Currently, a class with 10 students is working hard to complete the course requirements.

The PCC continues to support this important training opportunity through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing.



Staff, students and guests of the electronics/computer program for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Founded in 1950, the **Joint Christian Committee for Social Service in Lebanon (JCC)** is based in Beirut, and serves four communities: Dbayeh, Saida, Sabra and Tyre. Their mandate is to empower Palestinians of any age and gender with the knowledge and skills to be self-reliant. They focus on education, vocational training, advocacy and activities that are fun and encourage dignity. Palestinians are often treated as second-class residents in Lebanon, restricted from working in most fields, banned from owning property, forced to live in crowded camps and barred from formal education.

Sylvia Haddad is the Director of JCC and has her own experience of displacement. The programs aim to preserve Palestinian identity, heritage and culture. Through International Ministries, the PCC has been a partner with JCC since 2015.



Graduates of the program receive their certificates.

Planting Seeds of Hope in Malawi Prisons



These are the people who ensure the prison ministry continues. Pictured from left to right are Hastings M (our newest team member) Hastings P, Lyca and Rammy.

By the Rev. Joel Sherbino,
International Mission Staff, Paris
Presbyterian Church in Paris, Ont.

It has been a real privilege to oversee the prison ministry in Malawi. This ministry began several years ago with the vision to "plant seeds of hope," and is supported in part by Presbyterians Sharing.

Prisons in Malawi are overcrowded and underfunded, where

the men and woman inmates struggle with the lack of necessities, such as clean water, proper sanitation, adequate food, soap, medicine and clothing. Yet often their biggest worry is that they will be "forgotten."

Through the prison ministry, we are now involved with 22 prisons (17 of these for male inmates and five for female inmates), and two of these prisons are for young of-

fenders (ages 9–18). Each month we come in contact with approximately 4,800 inmates.

Prison ministry provides a "ministry of presence," where we offer Bible study, prayer, counselling and a listening ear. Each month we also supply soap, medicine, clothing and other necessities. Our desire is to share the love of God in Jesus and to give them hope by reminding them that they are not forgotten.

This past April, I was able to visit the team on the ground that facilitates the prison ministry. It was such an encouragement to spend time with ministry leaders, hearing and seeing their heart for the inmates and dreaming about future possibilities for the ministry.

The first day we arrived, we participated in two graduation ceremonies. A new initiative of the prison ministry has been to provide theological and leadership

training to inmates in prison. It is a one-year recognized certificate. This year we ran two cohorts at Mulanje and Blantyre prisons. It was exciting to see these men and women (33 graduates in total) receive a day pass to attend a graduation ceremony (gowns and all!) with their families. With additional funding, our hope is to provide this to other prisons in the area.

We were also able to visit and see the ongoing work within the various prisons. We visited Mphuphu prison, a place I had not been to since 2015. It is a prison that we were able to re-engage because Hastings M has joined the team. It is a farming prison that provides food (maize) for many of the other prisons in the region. However, it is in a remote area so few visitors come. At the end of our time, they asked if we could provide cups and plates for the inmates, as many of them had none. Because



of the generosity of our donors, we were able to purchase them.

I look forward to seeing the further ways that we can plant seeds of hope in the prisons in Malawi.

If you would like to donate in order to help support this important ministry, visit malawifriendsofprisons.ca. If you would like more info on the prison ministry, please contact me at joel@parispresb.ca.



PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Ending World Hunger Together



A mother in Somalia receives therapeutic food for her malnourished child. PHOTO CREDIT: D&P/TRÓCAIRE.

By Guy Smaghe, PWS&D Director

In 1983, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank was formed by Mennonite Central Committee as a common ecumenical response to world hunger. At the time, a few churches joined the coalition. Ten years later, in 1993, PWS&D joined the Foodgrains Bank.

This Christian response to hunger is aimed at: assisting in times of disaster to get people through periods of drastic food scarcity; seeking sustainable solutions to hunger by equipping farmers with knowledge through training; and advocating to address the root causes of hunger. Together, we are working to meet “Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger” through food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture.

The Foodgrains Bank has become an important hub of expertise on food security, food assistance and nutrition issues. At PWS&D, we both benefit from

this expertise and contribute to the mission in various ways.

As we seek sustainable solutions to hunger, we focus more on transfer of knowledge than handing out goods, with the main exception being the distribution of food in times of crises. It is much more effective to help farmers gain knowledge on farming techniques that maximize the use of locally available resources than to simply provide farming tools and other inputs. When new knowledge is acquired and applied, the results speak for themselves, and others might want to replicate the new techniques after witnessing local successes.

This is what I saw when I met Esther in Karonga, northern Malawi. Esther had been trained in conservation agriculture and she was now making and using compost, leaving crop residues in the fields, not tilling the land anymore, and intercropping corn with beans. As a result, her field was losing less soil to erosion,

was better at keeping moisture and soon more than doubled its production.

Witnessing such positive change, neighbours decided to copy her ways to see if they would achieve similar results. That kind of domino effect is indicative of the effectiveness of a project, which is ultimately what we are aiming for. Projects like this also build farmers’ resilience in the face of increasingly unpredictable weather patterns due to climate change. Furthermore, Esther’s children may well learn from her successes and use similar techniques or even improve on them, thereby creating lasting change.

We also engage in life-saving nutrition projects at the Foodgrains Bank. PWS&D is currently supporting two key projects in Somalia and Haiti. In both cases, local partners identify children under the age of five who are severely malnourished. Without assistance, their chances of survival are very slim. With therapeutic feeding and other necessary medical interventions, many of the children are able to start eating again. After a few weeks and gaining back some weight, many can eat regular food again. In these nutrition projects, funds are matched 4:1 by the Government of Canada, much like food assistance projects.

The matching funds available at the Foodgrains Bank allows PWS&D and other members to maximize the impact of our work by multiplying donations up to four times. This was the case after the earthquake that struck Türkiye and Syria in February. When PWS&D undertakes food security programming—supporting farmers in improving their production—we access other types of matching funds at the Foodgrains Bank, with formulas ranging from 1:1 to 3:1, depending on the geographic location of the project and availability of matching funds.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the Foodgrains Bank this year, we remain thankful for the work of the Christian churches through this ecumenical project. These joint efforts make it possible to reach nearly one million people every year as we work to end world hunger, one step at a time.



Guy and Esther in her field in northern Malawi.



In the immediate aftermath of the quake, hot meals were distributed to people displaced from their homes. PHOTO: GOPA-DERD.

Syria-Türkiye Earthquake Response

By PWS&D Communications

In early February 2023, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake rocked Syria, Türkiye and the surrounding regions. With more than 59,000 people losing their lives, and a hundred thousand more injured, the devastating quake also destroyed and damaged many families’ homes.

“We felt the earthquake and woke up at 4:15 a.m. The ground shook us for a few seconds. Then immediately we went downstairs. Our house, which is located on the fifth floor collapsed. The fourth, fifth and sixth floors of the building collapsed,” shared one survivor.

The Syrian population was already deeply affected by the ongoing war and the economic

collapse of the country. Now, many people must deal with being displaced and losing their livelihoods. In response, Canadian Presbyterians have contributed almost \$230,000 to respond to this crisis.

PWS&D was able to immediately respond in Syria through our networks and coalitions. Through the ACT Alliance*, PWS&D provided food, winterization materials—including blankets and mattresses—as well as medical aid to communities affected by the earthquake.

In the months following the earthquake, PWS&D provided food assistance through Canadian Foodgrains Bank members, with matching funds from the Government of Canada. A response with ADRA Canada supported the initial food needs of 1,200 households. An additional 600 families received pantry items for four months. Together with the Mennonite Central Committee, PWS&D is also helping to provide 8,800 individuals in Aleppo, Latakia and Tartous with nine months’ worth of food parcels, as well as water and sanitation kits and psychosocial support.

*This response was implemented by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East-Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (GOPA-DERD).



ACT Alliance members continue to deliver medical aid to those affected by the earthquake. PHOTO: GOPA-DERD.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Impressions from Guatemala

By Donna Wilkinson,
PWS&D committee member
from Regina, Sask.

From March 13 to 25, I had the privilege of travelling to visit PWS&D's partners and projects in Guatemala. I would love to share



The candle circle used by Maya Mam people to show interconnectedness and care for the earth.

some impressions of my trip.

The first thing that struck me is that Guatemala is a country that knows the gift of hospitality. It's something I think we in Canada could learn from. I was amazed by how I was welcomed—how people, especially women, were willing to share their lives with me, a total stranger, and how happy they were that we took the time to come and visit them.

I was impressed with our partners and the work they undertake, with support from Presbyterians, which positively affects individuals' lives, especially the lives of Indigenous women. The projects that we support help to ensure that Indigenous women learn about their rights, as well as about healthy and nutritious

plants. Through workshops led by our partners, women have learned how nutrient-rich native plants can be grown on small plots of land, which means that family garden plots are helping to improve the nutrition of their children, while also enabling them to earn a small income.

One of the memories that stays with me occurred when we were meeting with one of the Indigenous women's groups. We had learned from them about the work that was happening in their community, and one of the women, named Shanty, came up to me as we were leaving. She asked for a hug and said, "Thank you. That is the first time I have ever spoken up at a meeting."

I also found the customs of the

Indigenous people meaningful. In several meetings with PWS&D's partner AMMID, we took part in a candle-lighting ceremony (as seen in the picture). The circle of the candles represents our interconnectedness, the love of Mother Earth and the importance of protecting earth.

The colours of each candle are also significant. In turn, six of us would light the candles, one by one. After lighting each candle, a prayer was said related to some aspects of what the colour of the candle symbolized: for instance, the red candle represents red corn, blood, energy and sunrise; black stands for black corn, night, space to rest and relax; white is for white corn and peace; the yellow candle is for yellow corn,



Donna with Shanty, who shared about her experiences as an Indigenous woman in her community

skin and seeds; blue symbolizes the universe, sky, water and rain; finally, the green candle is lit for Mother Earth, plants and trees.

The other thing that struck me was that when we greeted the Maya Mam Indigenous women, they shook our hands and then they raised their hands to their foreheads. This is how they "share energy with each other." This gesture made me think about how we are all interconnected.



A group gathered at Dayspring Presbyterian Church in Edmonton for the Journey for Hope in 2022.

Join the Journey for Hope

In a world filled with need, we have a chance to create positive change—and it's as easy as taking a walk, playing a game or going for a bike ride!

On Saturday, Sept. 23, join PWS&D in the Journey for Hope. After the great success of the first ever Journey for Hope in 2022, we're excited to have PWS&D supporters from coast-to-coast join us once again to

raise funds for food security programs around the world. Climate change, conflict and COVID-19 have worsened the food situation for many who go hungry, and your participation can help farmers increase crop yields, provide food in times of crisis and improve nutrition.

Visit WeRespond.ca/JourneyforHope to learn more and to join the Journey!

Responding to Cyclone Freddy



Initial food distributions in response to Cyclone Freddy, which struck Malawi in March. PHOTO CREDIT: CARD.

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

Cyclone Freddy was one of the most powerful storms and longest-lived tropical cyclones ever recorded. It originated over the Indian Ocean on February 6 and made landfall in Malawi on March 12, 2023. From March 10 to 14, 2023, Southern Malawi was severely hit by heavy, persistent rains and strong winds.

The cyclone largely affected districts in the Southern Region—the scale of the disaster is unprecedented. Tens of thousands in Malawi have been left homeless and over 345,000 people were affected by the heavy rains, floods and landslides. Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs reports the cyclone

killed at least 1,216 people and another 538 are missing.

After the initial impact on March 12, PWS&D's partner, Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD), began work on an immediate response. PWS&D provided an initial contribution to CARD to assist with search-and-rescue efforts, needs assessments and immediate food for evacuated households.

As of April 12, a total of 325 households living in temporary shelters for those displaced by the flooding received an initial food distribution, which included maize flour and soya, to enable people to meet their immediate food requirements. PWS&D is continuing to work with our partners on the next phase of our response to the disaster.

Additionally, because of crisis food insecurity due to climate-related shocks, PWS&D was already implementing a three-month food assistance project for 2,500 households. This project, which started in February 2023, is providing food assistance in the form of cash transfers, as well as seeds to produce high-value crops.

However, Cyclone Freddy also hit many of the communities receiving assistance and some of the seeds provided through the project were washed away. CARD plans to replace the seeds to ensure that project participants will be able to meet their food needs.

To support this ongoing response, visit WeRespond.ca/donate.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

In War, Finding Hope in Art

The Kincardine Refugee Committee

By Stephanie Chunoo, PWS&D Communications, with files from Simon Chambers, ACT Alliance

Elizabeth's life has changed drastically in the past year. She used to live in Kharkiv, Ukraine, with her family, where she attended high school and nurtured her passion for drawing and painting people's hands and eyes. She dreamed of becoming an artist and attending university to pursue her passion.

But everything came to a standstill when Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In March, three rockets hit her apartment building, forcing the family to flee. "We had to leave with only our clothes and documents," recalled Irina, Elizabeth's mother.

The family of three found shelter in an abandoned house in a small village near Sambir, outside Lviv, offered by people known to Elizabeth's mother. Elizabeth's grandparents later joined them.

The move was a challenge for the family, with the house having been unoccupied for eight years and needing extensive repairs. Moreover, Elizabeth's mother could not continue her IT job due to the absence of reliable Internet in the village. The family had to work hard during the summer to renovate the house, which lacked essential household supplies and running water.

One day, Father Alek, who manages a local NGO that partners with ACT Alliance member Hungarian Interchurch Aid, came to their door. "I heard you are displaced and have just arrived here. How can I help? What do you need?" he asked.

Since the beginning of the war PWS&D, through the ACT Alliance, has provided support to Hungarian Interchurch Aid. This aid meant Father Alek could provide the family with essential items like food, clothes and even a refrigerator.

Although the war had taken a toll on Elizabeth, she continued to draw, but her art had become more disturbing and darker. However, as the family settled into their new home, Elizabeth completed high school and started a typography course in Lviv, which helped her art flourish once more. Her latest creation, a vibrant painting of the summer sky viewed through leaves, exudes optimism and vitality.



Elizabeth and her family fled Kharkiv to a small village near Lviv. During that time, her artwork underwent a dark period; however, she is now rediscovering hope through her work. PHOTO CREDIT: SIMON CHAMBERS/ACT ALLIANCE.

Thank you

PWS&D has been able to provide essential aid to individuals and families, such as Elizabeth's, thanks to the generous support of Presbyterians from all over Canada. The substantial financial support of over \$960,000 has allowed PWS&D to extend much-needed assistance to those impacted by the attack on Ukraine.

Through the ACT Alliance, we supported Hungarian Interchurch Aid as they provided food and shelter, as well as cash assistance and emergency mental health and psychological care for those displaced within Ukraine, as well as those who had fled the country.

Additionally, PWS&D provided food assistance to families in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania, through Canadian Foodgrains Bank member ADRA Canada, allowing donations to be matched 4:1. Families can use cash assistance to purchase food and other essential items.

Furthermore, PWS&D extended assistance to farmers through the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia by providing them with agricultural inputs like fertilizer that they were unable to afford as the war created serious inflation. This aid will enable the farmers to cultivate crops during the upcoming year.

Despite the ongoing war, the demand for aid remains high. And PWS&D remains committed to collaborating with local partners, ecumenical networks and coalitions to help. We appreciate your generous support!

By the Rev. Kathy Fraser, convener of the Knox Kincardine Refugee Committee

Since fall of 2014, when the world grew increasingly aware of the civil war in Syria, the people of Kincardine have opened their hearts and their wallets to help those in dire need. The word refugee became a familiar one as news spread of people forced to flee their homes and homeland—leaving behind all that they knew and loved—out of necessity.

While the crisis in Syria made global headlines, the reality is that there are millions of refugees from many countries who are far from home, living in camps or in hiding, but with hope for a new tomorrow.

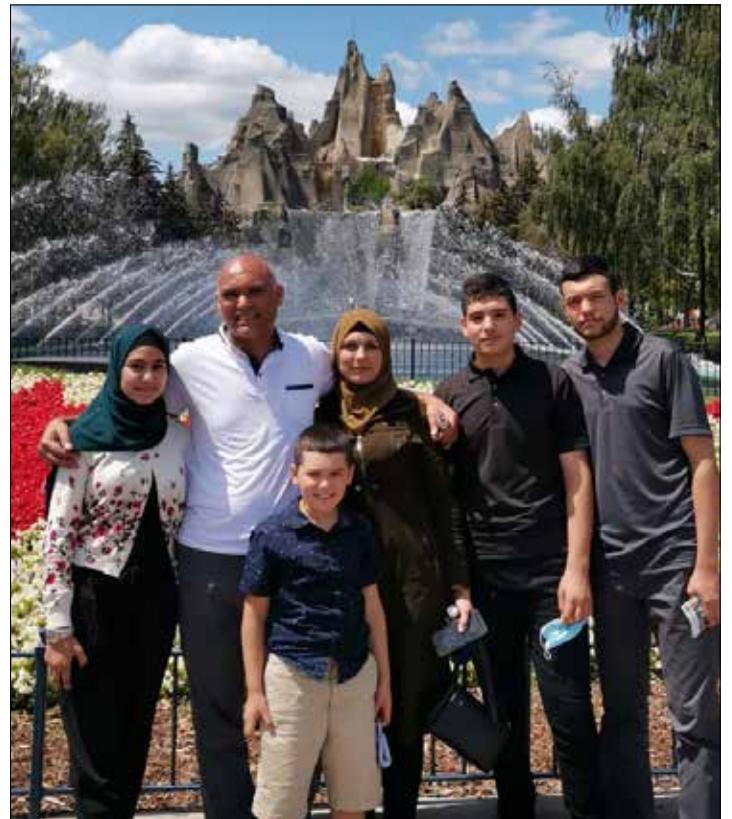
This year marks 10 years of the Kincardine Refugee Committee (KRC) working to bring families to a new land, where they can find safety and solace, help and hope, freedom and friendship.

The KRC works in cooperation with, and under the auspices of PWS&D, and we have been grateful for their support, advice and encouragement. That said, refugee sponsorship knows no denominational or religious bounds. People from all faiths and no faith have come together to share their common humanity in response to the stranger in need.

At a public meeting held in the fall of 2014, this community (Kincardine, Ripley, Tiverton and Point Clark) raised more than \$70,000 in cash and pledges to sponsor a refugee family. It was an outpouring of love and generosity, not only in terms of financial support but also "hands to the wheel—feet on the ground" assistance. Volunteers poured forward with offers of help.

While the Syrian crisis launched this work, we decided not to limit our sponsorship efforts to refugees from any particular country. Through PWS&D we were made aware of an Iranian family living in Turkey who were in urgent need of sponsorship. Moved by their story, we applied to sponsor them to Kincardine.

In August 2016, after months of preparation and patient waiting, we welcomed a mother and her three adult children. They arrived with only a few pieces of luggage



A trip to Canada's Wonderland was gifted to the Almeri family by a resident of Kincardine, who accompanied them for a day of fun and adventure.

and no English skills, but were filled with hope and deep gratitude for the opportunity to begin a new life.

Through the local community, the family received a full year of support, which included clothing, food, housing, ESL classes, orientation to Canadian customs and laws, access to health professionals and friendship—all that is needed to make a fresh start.

A year later, with their English skills much improved and a desire to move forward with their education and lives, the family left Kincardine. In 2022, they all became Canadian citizens; thankful for the new beginning they have found in Canada.

With more than \$30,000 remaining in the bank, as well as the energy and desire to continue our work, the Kincardine Refugee Committee called another public meeting in November 2017. This time, an application was submitted to sponsor a specific family who had been brought to our attention—a Syrian family of six, living in a camp in Lebanon.

In the fall of 2020, with COVID restrictions in full swing, the family arrived. Since that time, they have become well integrated into the community—learning Eng-

lish, working, attending school, making friends, living their lives.

In April 2022, after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, we received many emails from desperate people looking for refugee sponsorship. One such email touched our hearts deeply. It came from a young woman pleading for help on behalf of her mother and siblings. Her father had been killed by the Taliban and they were forced to flee to neighbouring countries where they lived in hiding, fearing for their lives.

Based on the situation, we decided to apply to sponsor and welcome them. The same process ensued—fundraising, finding and furnishing a suitable home, waiting, wondering and, at times, worrying.

Happily, on March 24, 2023, four members of the family arrived. On May 2, the eldest daughter, who had been living on her own in a different country for the past three years, joined them in Kincardine. What a joyous reunion that was!

With thanks to so many for their ongoing support and encouragement, the Kincardine Refugee Committee intends to continue the work of sponsoring those in need. It is the work of our shared humanity.

Discussions about Rural and Remote Ministry During the 1980s

By Peter Bush, former Editor of *Presbyterian History*

The Board of World Mission introduced “Suggested Guidelines for Mission Strategy in Rural Canada” at the 1983 General Assembly (A&P, 1983, pp. 458–461), starting a six-year conversation about Rural and Remote Ministry within the church.

The guidelines opened with an attempt to define “rural,” the result being rural communities had populations of 10,000 persons or fewer. The definition recognized that “rural” did not always mean “agriculture.” Nine theses statements provided the skeleton to the guidelines, drawing on what was known about “the many examples of [rural] congregations growing, qualitatively and quantitatively in dynamic and encouraging ways,” and (1) were to be studied by congregations and presbyteries; (2) would lead to the development of better resources for congregations; and (3) affirmed the “vitality and validity of rural ministry and mission.”

The second thesis statement included: “The rural congregation is an adequate centre for the mission and ministry in rural Canada.” Rural congregations did not need to emulate urban or suburban congregations to be vital congregations bearing witness to the good news revealed in Jesus Christ. In fact, the values of self-sufficiency and independence which mark the life of many rural communities and congregation were strengths to be applauded. The responsibility for rural church life depended upon the congregations and clergy of rural churches



A photo of Valleyview Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., taken in the 1980s. PHOTO CREDIT: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ARCHIVES

and their presbyteries. The national structures were to take the lead from the rural community, “the national agencies must re-discover the ‘servant role.’”

The church had been invited to respond to the guidelines. By February 1984, 105 responses had been received, which encouraged the Board of World Mission to “propose that the Joint Task Force on Rural Ministries be reconstituted.” But little action was reported until two years later in November 1986 when a Rural and Remote Consultation took place in Lumsden, Saskatchewan. Billed as an opportunity for churches in western Canada to express their concerns, the Lumsden gathering was a crucial event in giving permission to clergy, elders, and lay people from Rural and Remote congregations to speak of the challenges and joys of rural church life, and to confront

church office personnel with the ways in which the national structures denigrated, diminished, and dismissed rural congregations. (I was not at the Lumsden gathering, but in speaking to some who were at that gathering they describe it as transformative in their self-understanding as rural church people.) The Lumsden gathering led to two distinct sets of conversations within the denomination, running on parallel tracks.

The first conversation picked up on the farm voices as the Church and Society section of the Board of Congregational Life brought lengthy reports to the Assembly in 1987 (a preliminary report) and 1988 (a fuller report with 11 recommendations) about the food crisis in Canada. The presenting issue was the runaway interest rates (which, throughout the 1980’s, was over 9%), which

dramatically impacted farmers, particularly new, younger farmers. The interest rate crisis laid bare other challenges for the family farm. These reports took up a prophetic stance, offering comfort to the hurting and discomfiting urbanites who knew little about how their food was produced.

The second conversation was spurred on by two overtures to Assembly in 1987—one from the Presbytery of Kamloops, the other from the Presbytery of Assiniboia, asking for a Task Force on Rural and Remote Ministries to propose policy changes that would not “negatively affect [rural and remote] pastoral charges.” The Rural and Remote Task Force was reconstituted and began a two-year exploration of the joys and challenges of rural ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The Task Force’s nine-page

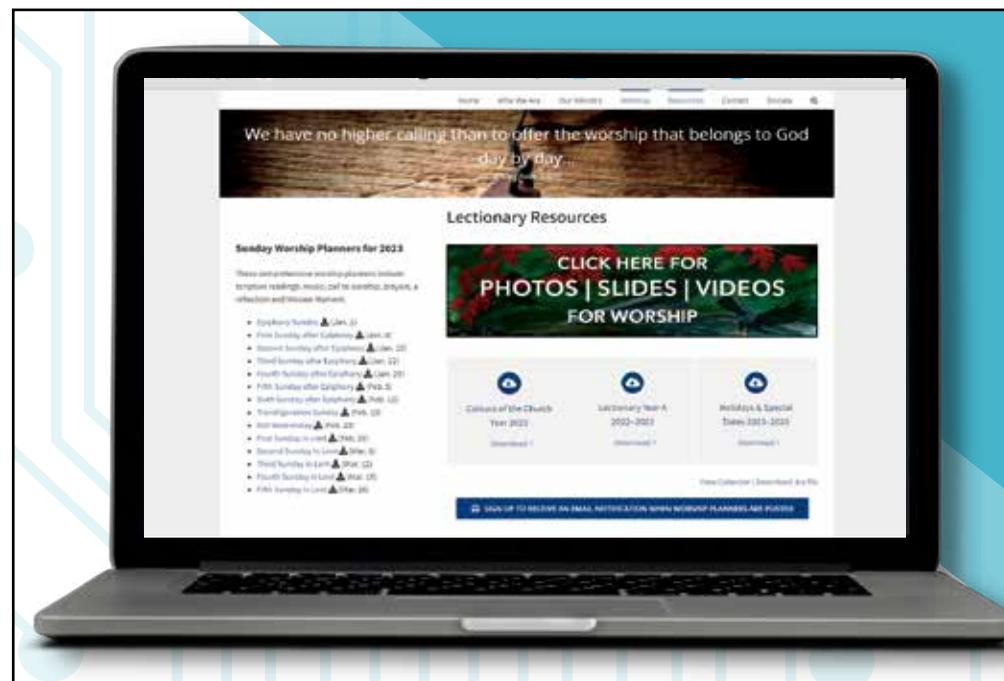
report to the 1989 Assembly, together with its 16 recommendations, presented a comprehensive re-imagining of the place of rural and remote ministries within the denomination, as vital contexts of Jesus’ mission in the world. (A&P, 1989, pp. 469–478)

A significant area of concern was the staffing of rural churches. The colleges of the church were asked to add a rural exposure/immersion component to their curriculum, recognizing that many graduates would begin their ministries in rural congregations. Presbyteries were called to build intentional mentoring networks around ministers newly arrived in rural congregations. Congregations were challenged to build relationships with their pastors so that the minister and their family felt welcomed and had a sense of belonging in the community.

Among the calls for structural changes was the right of aid-receiving congregations to call their ministers, instead of having ministers appointed to them. This and other recommendations sought to address the second-class status many rural congregations experienced within the denomination.

Finally, a clarion call was issued to re-imagine the dominant model of ministry: “That presbyteries consider alternate models of ministry for existing rural and remote work instead of terminating that work.”

The nine theses of the “Suggested Guidelines” are now 40 years old, inviting the question: What theses would define a Mission Strategy in Rural Canada in 2023?





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Generosity Assessment: Helping Churches Face the Future

By Dr. Lori Guenther Reesor, author, speaker and generosity coach. She blogs at lgresor.com and has been a frequent contributor to Presbyterian stewardship webinars, that can be found at presbyterian.ca/leadership-webinars/#stewardship

My superpower is helping churches talk about money. If you are a church person, you'll know the silence and secrecy that shroud the topic of money.

One of the tools in my toolbox is a "Generosity Assessment." Generosity begins with gratitude. I don't just look at the giving numbers and ages of donors, I listen to what a congregation *values*.

I reached out for feedback to a congregation that participated in a Generosity Assessment pilot project with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The resulting email from one of the elders made my day:

I do remember your visit and how you changed our thinking about giving...Our congregation completed the survey you provided...It told us a lot about who was giving, how much people in different age groups were giving, and how to plan for the future. We learned that the congregation believes [our church] is a place where people care for one another and enjoy coming together; embracing creative worship time and faith formation. And we learned that giving generously is a response to the gratitude we feel to God.

I was tremendously humbled and grateful to get an email like that. Let me explain what a Generosity Assessment is about.

I did my doctorate researching Christian giving. I toured church basements, talking to faithful donors in five provinces. I have consumed so much urn coffee that I should get some type of prize. But hearing stories of why Christian donors give was the real treasure.



*Giving is a **faith** question more than a **budget** question.*

An unspoken appeal to guilt and obligation doesn't inspire generosity, despite the popularity of this approach in many churches. I tell congregations "Jesus talks about money; we can too." Giving is a *faith* question more than a budget question.

Gratitude survey

My Generosity Assessment begins with two questions:

- What are three things you are grateful for about your church?
- What are three ways the church uses its money that you value most?

The answers to these questions tell me—and church leadership—a lot about the congregation. I can see patterns.

How old are donors?

While I can share numbers about Canadian giving according to age, when congregations see their own data, they believe and relate to it.

I ask church treasurers to prepare donation totals for the previous year, along with estimates of how old the donor is.

Church treasurers tell me that the process of creating a spreadsheet with giving totals and donor ages is very instructive. They see the patterns themselves. The youngest donor age I've seen is 15 and the oldest is over 100. (My giving-by-age table wasn't adding up to 100%, because I had failed to imagine donors over 100.) However, many givers in our congregations—both in the amount they give and by the number of givers we have—are often in their seventies, eighties and nineties. When we look at the numbers, we can often see whether a congregation is two or three funerals away from disaster.

Grounded in gratitude

The testimonial from the church elder said it best, but I'll reiterate: Listening to what a congrega-

tion is grateful for and telling those stories back to them is my favourite part of a Generosity Assessment. If we only looked at the numbers, we might be very discouraged; however, the stories from the Generosity Assessment offer reason for hope.

The stories that come out of the gratitude survey can be shared on Sunday mornings before the offering, in the church newsletter or on their website. These are also stories:

- to include on a thank-you letter with the annual receipts
- to remember as the church asks for bequests

The testimony of a faithful donor explaining why she has faithfully supported her church for decades is the best stewardship sermon going.

Further money conversations

The giving numbers and donor ages create a springboard for

talking about gifts, including in wills and bequests. I met a donor who added his church to his will as a result of our Generosity Assessment conversation, even before the actual assessment happened. Gifts in wills can help to provide the bridge financing for the future of the church, a future that will look very different.

Just this past Sunday, I was speaking at a congregation, and I asked how many people remembered their dad getting paid in cash and counting it in piles on the kitchen table: first a church pile, then a grocery pile and then a pile for everything else, if there is any money left. People nodded. Every congregation has generous stories to share.

However, it is also essential to recognize that people don't go to church like they used to. I am talking about people who used to be Christian and who now identify as "none," as in "none of the above." Denial will not help the church face the future. It's essential for the church to have a loving and honest look at present reality. What gifts does the congregation have to share? And what do congregations have to teach about giving?

A Generosity Assessment provides an appreciative and truthful snapshot of congregational giving, in order to make the money conversation part of our faith conversation and to see hope for the future.

A version of this article first appeared March 9, 2023, at hilborn-charitynews.ca/articles/faith-based-fundraising-generosity-assessment-helping. Reprinted with permission.

If you would like to do a Generosity Assessment for your congregation read more about it at presbyterian.ca/stewardship/generosity-assessment and contact Karen Plater, Associate Secretary for Stewardship & Planned Giving, at kplater@presbyterian.ca or 1-800-619-7301 ext. 272.

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WOMEN

125 Years of the PCC in the Bhil Field, India

By Cathy Reid and Sarah Kim,
Women's Missionary Society

On February 13, 2023, Cathy Reid, National President of the Women's Missionary Society (WMS), and Sarah Kim, WMS Executive Director, embarked on a long-awaited trip to India. Our friends in the Bhil Field of India had been planning a celebration of the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Rev. John Buchanan in a place called Amkhut, about an hour's drive outside a village called Jobat, where the PCC and the WMS have had a Christian presence for over a century.

The planning for a celebration started when Pauline Brown's 70th anniversary of arrival in India was marked in November 2021.

Due to COVID-19, the celebration dates were postponed twice. Finally, the celebrations were set for February 16–19, 2023, in Amkhut, and invitations were sent to the PCC and the WMS.

The celebrations were held over four days. We attended the big event on Saturday. As we arrived, we were thrilled to see much joyous dancing and singing throughout the huge field outside the Amkhut church and the WMS bungalow. We were told there were about 3,000 people in attendance. There was something for all ages. While the adults were in worship, a separate children's program took place. Cathy Reid participated with the 300 children! The worship was lively with music led by a praise band. The

preacher was powerful, and the responses of the people could be felt and seen. There was no translation, so we could not fully understand, but we could feel the spirit of the people and God's presence throughout.

The highlight of the day was when we were asked to come up to the front, along with Pauline Brown. Pauline was honoured for her many years of living and working with the people in India. All the seniors attending that day (those over 70 years of age) were asked to come up to the stage and greet Pauline. Many came up, and one by one they greeted her with hugs and kisses. It was a wonderful opportunity for them to see each other. It was an emotional but beautiful experience to



Cathy Reid and the late Pauline Brown.

observe friendships that spanned over 70 years!

Afterwards, Cathy Reid brought greetings on behalf of the WMS. She also read a letter from the 2022 Moderator of the PCC, the Rev. Dr. Robert (Bob) Faris, with words of congratulations. How wonderful it was to see the bonds of Christian partnership!

Pauline Brown died on April 1.

She would have been 98 years old in May. Until the day of her death, she was surrounded by much love and care from her Indian family. She lived a strong, incredible life, with faith at the core of her existence. We thank God for Pauline and for her witness to the bond of love in Christ between the PCC/WMS and the people of the Bhil Field.

Celebrating the World Day of Prayer

By Marybel Brennerman, member
of Embro Women's Missionary
Society (WMS) Auxiliary

The World Day of Prayer, March 3, 2023, was held at Knox Presbyterian Church in Embro, Ont. For years, the four churches of Knox United (Embro), St. Andrew's United (Brooksdale), Knox Presbyterian (Harrington) and Knox Presbyterian (Embro) have taken turns hosting the World Day of Prayer Services.

As a result of Covid, March 6, 2020, was the last in-person service. So it was with great joy that we gathered together for the worship service written by the Chris-

tian women of Taiwan.

Taiwan has a very special connection with the Embro area. One hundred and fifty-one years ago, the Rev. George Leslie MacKay, the first Canadian Presbyterian missionary, left his home here and went to Formosa, now Taiwan. The Taiwanese still claim the Rev. MacKay was the greatest gift that Canada had given them. So, we sang the Rev. MacKay's favourite hymn.

The women of Taiwan wear head wreaths on special occasions to show welcome and respect, so the pianist Marlene Matheson and leaders Anne Matheson and Marybel Bren-



man wore beautiful head wreaths of orchids and blossoms made by an Embro florist. Everyone was given a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, and as part of the service each person put their piece in place, resulting in a large puzzle map of Taiwan. This symbolized that, in the eyes of God, we are not confetti blown around by the wind but irreplaceable pieces of a puzzle that God fits together.

There was a time of tea and fellowship after the service, where all enjoyed seeing the display of the Rev. George Leslie MacKay's things and hearing President and Historian Norma Howe give some interesting facts about him.



Retreat at Crieff Hills

By Diane Stinson, Women's
Missionary Society member

On June 14, 2022, more than 30 Women's Missionary Society (WMS)/Mission Circle members and congregational members of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Simcoe, Ont., attended a retreat at Crieff Hills Conference Centre in Puslinch, Ont. WMS Southwest-



Kyoungsoo Hwang puts her final touch on a rock painting activity.

ern Ontario Synodical President, Margaret McGugan, and National President, Cathy Reid, also attended. The day focused on prayer and Margaret Henderson was our theme speaker. The day included a lunch and free time to explore the property. Many tried using the labyrinth. A variety of activities were available for the attendees.



Betty Ferguson, left, and Kyoungsoo Hwang relax while doing rock painting.

BOOK REVIEW

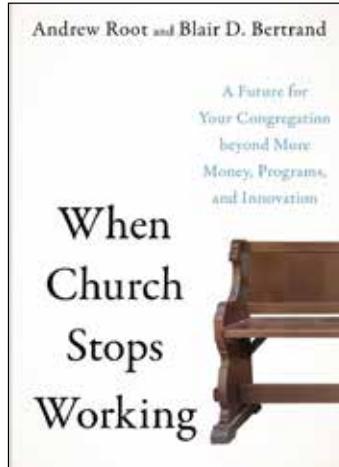
A Review of *When Church Stops Working*

By the Rev. John Borthwick,
minister of St. Andrew's
Presbyterian Church in Guelph,
Ont., and the lead of The Abbey
(theabbey.ca), a virtual ministry
that seeks to "tend to those who
nurture spiritual things." John
will begin in the role of Director of
Lifelong Learning at Knox College
on August 1.

*When Church Stops Working:
A Future for Your Congregation
beyond More Money, Programs,
and Innovation*
Written by Andrew Root and Blair
D. Bertrand
Brazos Press, May 2023

Do you remember those fun illustration-riddled books put out by Lyle E. Schaller in the late 1980s? I'm looking at one right now: *44 Ways to Expand the Financial Base of Your Congregation*. Let me be clear when I say, *When Church Stops Working* is not that kind of book.

Coming on the heels of Dr. Andrew Root's *Ministry in a Secular Age* series, this brief collaboration with our PCC's own Dr. Bertrand seeks to be more accessible to church leaders and members who may not have the time, energy or cognitive attentiveness to navi-



gate Root's 1,400 pages of sage reimagining or the near thousand-page tome of philosopher Charles Taylor's *The Secular Age*.

Having expended just that over the years as each new work in the series was released, I can admit—as do the authors—that the consistent feedback from Root's readers, including myself, was, "I can see me and my reality in what you are describing, but I have no

idea what to do next."

Many of us wished that Root would just put it into a simple book that spoon-feeds weary servants of the Institutional Church with the "Ten Things to Turn It All Around" or the "Nine Lives of the Resurrected Church." Instead, we have *When Church Stops Working*—have I mentioned that it isn't that kind of book?

If you are like me you will find yourself at the halfway point, declaring in exasperation—or literally writing in the margin—"So we are halfway through, and the answer to the question of how we address the decline of today's church is to...WAIT?! That's it?!"

As if they are sitting beside me as I read, the authors brilliantly address my feeling in the very next section as they write: "You might be thinking, these are nice theological ideas, but they seem disconnected from the decisions we need to make for our congre-

gation. We can't wait." AMAZING! Yes. We are a people obsessed with being busy—with doing and not simply being. It was a message that I didn't know I needed to hear. I can honestly say that as I set about to read the book, I was wrapped up in a million different ideas that would have kept me busier than ever to respond as best as I could to the crisis that we face in today's church.

When Church Stops Working stopped me in my tracks. It convinced me and I trust that it will convince you too if you persevere and fight against the siren call of this "life hack" world we live in. It became the inspiration for a monthly conversation space hosted by The Abbey (theabbey.ca) called: "We Need to Listen."

Thanks to Root and Bertrand, I've moved away from dying busily and living actively as I seek to trust in and be attentive to what God might be up to in this secular age.

PROFILES

Remembering Pauline Brown



Pauline Brown.



Pauline Brown with Evelyn Murdoch.



Pauline Brown teaching women in Barwani, India, sometime between the 1950s and 1970s.

After a long and rich life of 97 years, a faithful ministry as a nurse in rural India and a brief illness, Dr. Pauline Brown died in her adopted and beloved hometown of Jobat, India, on the morning of Saturday, April 1.

Pauline was a devoted public health and missionary nurse. As a young girl, Pauline dreamed of working in India. While serving as a nurse in the navy in the 1950s, Pauline met a former missionary to India, which intensified her sense of call to work overseas. The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) appointed the 25-year-old Pauline for a four-month posting. A few months became a 55-year-long ministry working with the Bhil people under the Church of North India. Her focus was always on

health care and education in the region of Bhopal. In 2001, Pauline received the Order of Canada for her dedicated service, and the church recognized her ministry with the degree of Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa).

Pauline lived by grace. She understood that God's graciousness filled her every waking moment. She was a natural preacher who lived out her faith in word and deed, never missing an opportunity to proclaim God's grace. Her capacities to build community, to lead in times of trouble and to find good news in every moment meant that she transformed people and situations. Her wit, humour and honesty ensured that she was a trustworthy and entertaining companion on every journey. Pauline cannot be described with mere words—she was a force of nature, always encouraging, always a blessing, always participating in the transformative activity of God. To receive her blessing was to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that you were loved.

Pauline retired in Jobat, India, where she was hailed as a beloved and respected elder and wise community leader. She warmly welcomed visitors from around the world into her charming, laughter-filled, book-lined home.

Pauline was buried near her beloved community in the cemetery outside the front door of her home. The large banner that welcomed visitors to her home read:

*She is radiant like the rising sun;
Her beauty lights up the world.
She wears sun and moon as her jewels.
Her eyes are like fish and lotus and darting deer.
Her face is fragrant like champaka.
Her hair like incense.
She has capacities, she is active, she is aware, she is fearless, and she is free.*



Professional portrait of Pauline Brown taken for the WMS in the 1960s.



Pauline Brown with students in the 1960s.

All photos provided courtesy
of the Presbyterian Church Archives.

Remembering Rodger Talbot



The Rev. Rodger Talbot being welcomed at Indore Airport, India, in October 1968 by the Rev. Samuel Tazlo. PHOTO CREDIT: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ARCHIVES

The Rev. Rodger Talbot died peacefully on February 18, 2023, just before his 95th birthday. We are grateful for his extraordinary life, and now his life beyond death.

Rodger's life, faith and ministry were shaped by the people and communities he served.

New to ministry and newly married to Donna (Klie), he moved from southern Ontario to meet the good people of the Presbyterian Church in White Rock, B.C. Eventually, Rodger and Donna spent six formative years in Japan, serving the Korean Christian Church there, and developing many lifelong friendships.

Returning to Canada, he gave leadership to International Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada before taking up community-based ministry in the diverse Toronto neighbourhood of Flemingdon Park. An activist pastor, he worked with others there to build community, to affirm and advocate for residents' dignity and rights—many of whom were new immigrants to Canada.

A return to the church's national office brought new insights to International Ministries. After



The Rev. Rodger Talbot and his wife, Donna, 1960. PHOTO CREDIT: "KIMCHI & MAPLE LEAVES: UNDER THE RISING SUN," WRITTEN BY ROBERT K. ANDERSON

retirement, ever open to new adventures, Rodger and Donna accepted an invitation to the Presbyterian Church in Mauritius, where he served as minister of a small village church.

In his 90s, he appreciated being part of Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto. He lived life fully, thankful for family and the many who were like family to him. He was deeply proud of his

children, Michael (deceased), Patti (George) and Ian (Penney), and his beautiful grandchildren, Dean, Benjamin, Mikayla, Liam, Zachary and Brendan. He loved the extended Klie family and seven decades of family times at the cottage on the farm in Essex County.

In his final years, Rodger enjoyed being active in the Teddington retirement community in Toronto and was thankful for



Eileen Parish and the Rev. Rodger Talbot and an Annual Council Meeting for the Board of World Missions at Knox College, May 1990. PHOTO CREDIT: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ARCHIVES

care provided by its staff. We will miss him. We know, however, that there is rejoicing in Heaven as he is gathered into God's loving embrace and is greeted by his beloved Donna, son Michael, sister Gwen (Talbot Brennan) and the many cherished ones who preceded him.

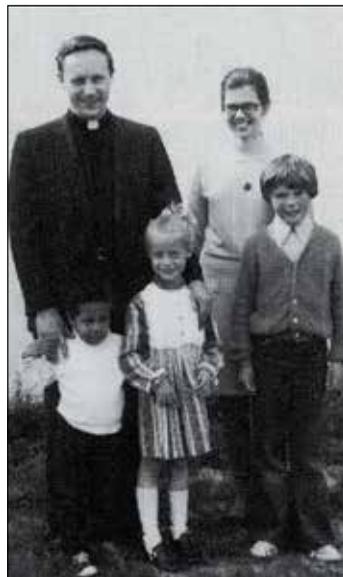
A Celebration of Life took place on Saturday, May 13, at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church.

Profile of the Rev. Charles Alexander Scott

By the Rev. Richard Fee, former General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency

The Rev. Charles (Charlie) Alexander Scott was born in Orangethorpe, Ont., on April 3, 1938, and passed away in Comox, B.C., on Dec. 11, 2022. He was the beloved husband of Sharon Yvonne Hutton for 62 years; she was a native of Hamilton, Ont., where Charlie would take his first university degree. (He proposed marriage between the first and second periods of a hockey game!) He was an inspirational father to Andrew (m. Brenda), Christine (m. Andrew Kotaska) and Daniel, and loving grandfather to Maya, Jesse, Jack, Luke, Andrew and Jaimie. He was predeceased by his parents, Charles and Janet, and siblings David, Jean and Nan.

Charlie received a B.A. undergraduate degree from McMaster University; theological education (B.D.) from Knox College, University of Toronto; and a Master of Theology (M.Th.) from New College, Edinburgh, Scotland. He served The Presbyterian Church in Canada at St. Andrew's, Victoria,



Charles Scott and his family in 1973. PHOTO CREDIT: LIFE & JOY

B.C. (1963–1965); Varsity Acres, Calgary, Alta., (1967–1973); St. Michael's and All Angels, Blantyre, Malawi (1973–1980); First Presbyterian Church, Regina, Sask.; and Gordon Presbyterian Church, Burnaby, B.C. He and Sharon settled in the Comox Valley for an active retirement.

Charlie was the first ordained clergy called to establish an extension congregation in Varsity

Acres, Calgary. He and Sharon and their growing family were deeply loved by the ultimately 102 member strong congregation that was established. Within six years he had spearheaded the building campaign and drew together faithful members. At his final service, his then 10-year-old son, Andrew, went up at the time of the benediction and asked in an audible voice, "Dad, are you going to cry, again?" The Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church (VAPC) congregation joined with the Scott family in solid prayerful support and established a strong bond with the Blantyre, Malawi, congregation that lasted for many years.

During his formative years, Charlie was deeply influenced by his maternal grandfather, a United Church minister. As he looked back over his years of theological education and his early years in ministry, he stated that it was his M.Th. thesis, which explored the relationship between the gospel and the law, as preached by the Apostle Paul, which proved pivotal to his whole understanding of God. He believed that his thesis

and his work at Varsity Acres in Calgary shaped his relationship with God in Christ, the church and community, Creation and his family. He landed on the Grace of God as his fundamental reality of all life. "Since VAPC was the first church in which I served, the congregation helped shape my ministry for the years ahead. Our experience of the community of Christ was positive and fulfilling."

Charlie and Sharon served the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), Blantyre Synod, from June 1973 until 1980. While there, he was an associate minister at the Cathedral of St. Michael and All Angels in Blantyre. He was involved in youth work in the congregation and taught New Testament classes at Kapeni Theological College.

In 1978, Charlie co-founded and became the first Director of Theological Education by Extension (TEEM) in Malawi. Modelled after a South African educational enterprise, he wrote in his 1980 annual report: "As Director of TEEM I have the opportunity to help create a new and worthwhile venture and answer a basic need



The Rev. Charles (Charlie) Alexander Scott. PHOTO CREDIT: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ARCHIVES

in the church."

Charlie was an avid adventurer and outdoor enthusiast. Circumnavigating the globe, he explored Greek ruins, traveled through South-East Asia, climbed Mount Mulanji, swam the world's oceans and drove his mustard-coloured Land Rover through African game parks. In his retirement, Charlie was a keen gardener, cyclist and walker, an explorer of God's creation through kayaking, canoeing, fishing and camping, as well as the occasional paraglide.

Charles Scott also had a deeply personal spiritual practice, which he expressed through daily devotions with his wife, Sharon, through Celtic and Taizé contemplative spirituality. His spiritual practice encompassed body, mind, heart and soul. He had a gentle and compassionate spirit, infectious laugh, warm embrace and patient countenance.

REFLECTIONS

One Experience of Retirement

By the Rev. Kenn Stright, retired minister, retreated along the shores of Petpeswick Inlet, N.S.

*Strange to think
Hard to fathom
It's me—retired.
Or just tired, or just finished, or
just empty—whatever.
Retirement: a state of being—
with the emphasis on being...
No doing, or achieving, or com-
pleting,
Much more to do with recogniz-
ing, realizing, finalizing.
Not 'let your servant go in peace'
kind of finalizing
More 'even to old age and grey
hairs... I proclaim your might'
realizing
Somewhere in here comes the
recognizing—
Of what life is all about.*

"So, what are you going to do now?"

"Retire!"

"So, what does that mean...for you?"

Retirement takes as many forms as there are people who step away from their work. Please don't tell my wife, Jeanne, what I'm going to say next, because she wouldn't believe I said it. But it's important to have and follow a plan, even if that plan is not set in stone.

Two paths seem most prominent in this journey called retirement. The first is called "retire." That simply means "step away from" and that usually takes the form of cutting back, taking things a little slower and focusing on what one would like to do. The second path could be called "retread," like those tires that have worn thin and need a new tread to make it through the next thousand kilometres.

Retirement for many clergy begins just about where they left off. There are still committees to join and meetings to attend and responsibilities, such as: mentoring, taking on interim-moderator roles, Sunday supply, representing the church on boards and committees. The biggest danger for retiring clergy is never getting to retire!

I have put together a record of the initiatives I have been part of since ordination. I've called it "A Journey of Faith in the Promises of God." Every time I thought this record was complete, I found myself engaged in a new phase of my faith journey, so I created



yet another chapter called "The Journey Continues"—and that just about sums up the meaning of retirement for me. The journey does continue and takes on aspects that surprise me. Let me illustrate with just one paragraph from that chapter:

One major change that came with retirement was the ability to respond to current events by attending rallies and protests. Jeanne and I managed to join others to march in Halifax in support of the climate strikes, gather in Africville to declare "Black Lives Matter," rally in support of Indigenous fishers seeking a moderate living fishery, walk in solidarity with those fighting climate change and a few other events as well. I joined online Bible studies and conferences with Kairos (ecumenical justice coalition) as well as other groups and took part in letter writing campaigns for everything from protecting Owl's Head Provincial Park to saving habitat for endangered mainland moose. So, "it ain't over till it's over" is being proved daily!

If you asked any of my close friends to describe my retirement, they would respond with two

words: "Gone sailing!" I have taken into account my retirement activities that I have cultivated over the decades and sailing would be at the top of the list. Jeanne and I can often be found out on the water, cruising along the coast. What is different now is that I can also be part of a racing crew (C&C 99 for those who know), which was never a possibility when weekend responsibilities limited many opportunities. Other activities that have been enhanced by retirement include: jogging, reading, writing (check out Presbycan online), serious walking and many other physical activities.

Volunteerism has taken on new meaning in retirement. The pandemic closed many activities and opened numerous opportunities to serve. We found ourselves taking on roles at pop-up Covid clinics and joining an army of people putting together test kits. We became drivers for the food bank. Jeanne is part of a community support group that engages with people in isolated or long-term care situations.

Retirement has become a time to deepen my spiritual life. This includes the first real opportunity for my wife and me to come together in daily devotions. Hectic sched-

ules and radically different ways of doing things made our devotional life together sporadic. It is now the first item on our daily agenda.

I've saved the best for last. Who knew being a grandparent could be so rewarding, so challenging and so physically demanding? Retirement makes all kinds of relationships possible and in my case the relationship with our children and their families has become so much deeper. I could say the same about friendships as well.

That little poem I wrote has a rather serious message. Parts of it may apply to you where you are at this moment. Where I am is found at the end: "Somewhere in here comes the recognizing—of what life is all about." I pray I am becoming more of a human being... with the emphasis on the being!

So, what does all this talk of retirement come down to? Let me summarize:

- Retirement is creating continuity with what was the primary activity of life, while carving out a new future where purpose is more important than prosperity (or prestige!).
- Retirement is pursuing your passion and fulfilling your

calling.

- Retirement is about lifestyle—healthy eating, healthy habits, healthy activity.
- Retirement is about relationships—maintaining those that have been meaningful and cultivating those that are fulfilling.
- Retirement is about contributing in whatever way is possible, given your situation. Estelle was a young deaconess at the turn of the nineteenth century. She developed a degenerative disease that left her completely blind as a young woman. When she celebrated her 100th birthday, at that advanced age, completely blind, she engaged in the most intensive prayer phone ministry I have ever witnessed!
- Retirement is about developing and deepening your spiritual life.
- Retirement is about learning and growing and flourishing.
- Retirement is about "being" in mind, body and spirit.

Retirement is about learning to know who you are and sharing what wisdom has come to you throughout life.

Isaiah 46:4, 17–18: "Even to your old age I am he, even when you turn grey I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; will carry and will save... O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come."

Psalm 71:9: "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent."

Here's a final thought to take with you since you have so much time now to meditate and ponder: Our journey with Christ does not end in a specific destination; it always continues in yet another direction. The spiritual journey is about taking a step, even when we are unsure where that will take us. A Hasid story asks the question, "When did the Red Sea part?" According to the Jewish storyteller, the waters separated not when Moses commanded them, not when he waved his staff over the waters. The waters parted when Moses put his feet in (from explorefaith.org).

PULPIT VACANCIES

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

Atlantic Provinces

Alliston, WellSpring
(full-time minister)

St. John's, St. Andrew's
(full-time minister)

Sydney, Bethel
(full-time minister)

Charlottetown, Zion
(full-time minister)

Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Chesterville, Winchester & Morewood (full-time minister)

Inverness, Que. (full-time ecumenical shared ministry)

McDonald's Corners, Knox, Elphin & Snow Road
(part-time or stated supply)

Montreal, Snowdon Korean
(full-time minister)

Montreal, Taiwanese Robert Campbell (full-time minister)

Pembroke, First (part-time or stated supply minister)

Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Bobcaygeon, Knox
(full-time minister)

Bramalea, North Bramalea
(60%-time minister)

Collingwood, First
(full-time minister)

Kingston, St. Andrew's
(full-time minister)

Markham, St. Andrew's
(full-time minister)

Mississauga, Erindale
(full-time minister)

Richmond Hill (full-time minister)

Toronto, Formosan
(full-time minister)

Toronto, Glenview
(full-time senior minister)

Toronto, Graceview
(full-time minister)

Toronto, Morningside High Park
(full-time stated supply)

Toronto, Mimico
(full-time minister)

Toronto, York Memorial
(half-time minister)

Unionville, Unionville
(full-time minister)

Vaughan, Vaughan Community
(full-time youth minister)

Whitby, St. Andrew's
(full-time senior minister)

Southwestern Ontario

Ailsa Craig, Beechwood
(part-time minister)

Amherstburg, St. Andrew's
(full-time minister)

Burlington, Burlington East
(full-time minister)

Burlington, St. Paul's
(half-time minister)

Brussels, Melville & Molesworth, St. Andrew's (full-time minister)

Forest, St. James
(full-time minister)

Hamilton, Chedoke
(full-time minister)

Innerkip (full-time interim minister)

London, Chalmers
(full-time minister)

London, Trinity Community
(half-time stated supply minister)

Lucknow & South Kinloss
(full-time minister)

Milverton, Burns (half-time minister or half-time stated supply)

North Pelham (Fenwick) & Lincoln, First Presbyterian & Rockway Presbyterian
(full-time minister)

Stratford, Knox
(full-time minister)

Alberta & the Northwest

Banff, St. Paul's
(full-time minister)

Calgary, Grace
(full-time lead minister)

Calgary, Grace (70%-100%-time stated supply minister)

Calgary, St. Andrew's
(full-time minister)

Calgary, St. Giles / New Generations (full-time minister)

Calgary, Westminster
(full-time minister)

Grande Prairie, Forbes
(full-time minister)

British Columbia

Langley, Langley
(60%-time minister)

Mission, St. Paul's
(half-time minister)

DEATH NOTICES

The Rev. Dr. Johan Eenkhoorn

Deceased May 31, 2023
Cornwall, Ont.

Marion Nellie Johnston

Deceased May 17, 2023
Edmonton, Alta.

The Rev. Ronald D. Mulchey

Deceased May 12, 2023
Southampton, Ont.

The Rev. John Paul Bigham

Deceased May 11, 2023
Ajax, Ont.

The Rev. Linda Erickson Robinson

Deceased May 9, 2023
Gatineau, Que.

The Rev. Mary Elizabeth Marsh

Deceased May 1, 2023
Edmonton, Alta.

Kenneth Paul Stuart Stanbury

Deceased April 22, 2023
Kleinburg, Ont.

The Rev. Gordon Gilmore Hastings

Deceased April 14, 2023
Niagara Falls, Ont.

The Rev. Dr. Karen Sue Bach

Deceased April 13, 2023
Perth Road, Ont.

The Rev. William James Salters McClure

Deceased April 5, 2023
Whitby, Ont.

The Rev. James George Perrie

Deceased April 3, 2023
Kerwood, Ont.

The Rev. Dr. James A. Thomson

Deceased April 3, 2023
Port Carling, Ont.

Dr. Pauline Brown

Deceased April 1, 2023
Jobat, India

Roger Alexander Lindsay

Deceased March 30, 2023
Toronto, Ont.

The Rev. Peter McKague

Deceased March 17, 2023
Edmonton, Alta.

Rowena Van Seters

Deceased February 23, 2023
Toronto, Ont.

Sara Reid

Deceased February 19, 2023
Hamilton, Ont.

The Rev. Rodger Talbot

Deceased February 18, 2023
Toronto, Ont.

The Rev. Charles Gordon D. Reid

Deceased February 16, 2023
Hamilton, Ont.

JUST WONDERING...



I love getting my copy of the newspaper, but I have a question: How do you choose which photos appear in the newspaper and why don't I see photos from my congregation?

Answered by Barb Summers, Editor

Thanks for your question and I'm so glad you enjoy reading the newspaper! The *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper is a submission-based publication. We rely on congregations, ministries and individuals to send in photos and articles. We don't pay contributors, so everyone who sends in content does so on a volunteer basis.

If you'd like to see your congregation represented in the newspaper, send in

some photos and text from recent events. Talk to your minister about what activities you think would be of most interest to a national audience and we would be glad to include them in an upcoming issue.

Please note that all submissions are edited for clarity, length, style and content, as required. Due to the popularity of the newspaper and limited space, we're not able to run all the material we receive. Submissions are restricted to those directly connected with The Presbyterian Church

in Canada, and we focus on the activities of congregations and PCC ministries over personal reflections or commentary.

All upcoming deadlines and more information can be found online at presbyterian.ca/connection. If you need photo consent forms, you can find them online at pres-

byterian.ca/photos. And finally, if you have any questions about what to submit, please reach out to me by email at connection@presbyterian.ca.

If you need photo consent forms, you can find them online at presbyterian.ca/photos.

All photos and articles for the Presbyterian Connection newspaper can be sent directly to connection@presbyterian.ca.

JUST WONDERING...



What is Environmental Racism?

*Answered by Katharine Sisk,
Justice Ministries*

Environmental racism describes how systemic racism in society results in Indigenous and racialized communities being made vulnerable to the worst impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. In practice this looks like:

- disproportionate proximity and greater exposure of Indigenous and racialized communities to contamination and toxins, and environmentally hazardous activities
- policies that allow harmful contamination and differential rates of cleanup for Indigenous and racialized communities
- history of excluding Indigenous and racialized communities from mainstream environmental decision-making arenas

For context, here is a situation in Ontario: In the 1960s, a pulp and paper plant released mercury into the headwaters of the Wabigoon river near Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows First Nation) and Wabaseemoong Independent Nations (Whitedog First Nation communities). The impact of this release has been well documented: an estimated ninety percent of Grassy Narrows' population have neurological symptoms of mercury poisoning, including numbness in fingers and toes, seizures and cognitive delays, and the disaster is also connected to premature morbidity.

In his report to the Human Rights Council, United Nations Special Rapporteur on

toxics and human rights, Baskut Tuncak, commented that, "There appears to be a pervasive trend of inaction by the Government [of Canada] in the face of existing health threats from decades-long historical and current environmental injustices and the cumulative impacts of toxic exposure on indigenous peoples. The case of Grassy Narrows and Whitedog is emblematic of indigenous communities being denied truth, justice, remedies and accountability for decades. The failure to provide these communities with an effective remedy for 50 years, still enduring the impacts of 10 tons of highly toxic mercury dumped in their rivers legally and without their consent, is a clear case of discrimination and a gross violation of their human rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

Dr. Ingrid Waldron, one of Canada's foremost academics regarding environmental racism, examines and documents environmental racism in her book *There's Something in the Water*, using case studies in Nova Scotia. She also documents the long history of resistance by Black and Indigenous communities that have been targeted by environmental racism. Such resistance is the reason that Bill C-226, a *National Strategy Respecting Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice Act* was tabled in Parliament. Bill C-226 was being studied by the Senate as this was written.

For more information, watch For the Love of Creation's webinar "Addressing Environmental Racism in Canada" online at youtu.be/3Kl9JcGOLe.



The Session at my church recently adopted a wedding policy stating that the congregation will host weddings based on the understanding that marriage is "a covenant relationship between two people." Should we add pride flag stickers on our doors or the sign in front of the church to help people know we are LGBTQ+ affirming?

Answered by Carragh Erhardt, Sexuality and Inclusion Program Coordinator

Having clarity about which definition of marriage a congregation uses is important. Your congregation is to be commended for thinking about ways to let people in your neighbourhood know which definition of marriage the Session has decided upon. Intentionally and clearly communicating your policy is important so that people in the congregation and neighbourhood know what to expect from your ministry.

First, it's important to ensure that the wedding policy has been shared with members of your congregation and added to the congregation's website.

Before displaying pride stickers or other related signage, it is essential for the Session to reflect on what else you have done to ensure that LGBTQI2+ people can trust the congregation will be respectful and accountable. When most LGBTQI2+ people see a pride flag or other affirming symbols on a church sign, they should expect that the ministry hosts same-sex weddings, and that the congregation is a place where they will not experience discrimination or harassment. Some denominations have a guided process that prepares congregations and other ministries to be designated an affirming ministry. These processes typically involve 18 to 24 months of education, discernment and action.

While The Presbyterian Church in Canada does not currently have an affirming ministry designation process, we can learn from other denominations. As an example, Affirm United—an organization within The United Church of Canada—describes affirming ministries as communities of faith that publicly declare their commitment to inclusion and justice for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. To become an affirming ministry, they require congregations to have: 1) a vision statement concerning the inclusion of people of all gender identities and sexual orientations in the life and work of their ministry; 2) a marriage policy in which couples of all gender combinations are treated equitably; and 3) a continuing plan of action. There are other steps in Affirm United's process. However, these are the three main components I advise

Presbyterian congregations to ensure they have in place before describing their ministry as affirming or displaying LGBTQI2+ pride symbols.

The Life and Mission Agency was directed by the General Assembly to produce resources that can assist ministries to fulfill decisions the church has made concerning sexuality over the last 30 years. These resources are available at presbyterian.ca/sexuality, and the site will be updated as further resources are produced.

Carragh Erhardt, Sexuality and Inclusion Program Coordinator, is available to help ministries review policies and discern steps toward LGBTQI2+ inclusion. Email cerhardt@presbyterian.ca or call 1-800-619-7301 ext. 278.



JUST WONDERING...



Submit your questions to connection@presbyterian.ca

How are we supposed to decide when to have communion and baptism in our church?

Answered by the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald,
General Secretary

Concerning the celebration of the sacraments generally, Section 111 of the Book of Forms instructs that, "The Session determines the appointed times and provides for the administration of the sacraments."

Section 110.4 of the Book of Forms states that, "The Session is responsible for provision for the Sacrament of Baptism. This sacrament is normally to be celebrated in a service of public worship." The Session, not the minister alone, approves requests for baptism and arranges for when baptisms are celebrated. The minister, and possibly some elders, meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child or children being baptized or with adults seeking baptism for themselves, to discuss the meaning of baptism and the vows

that they will take. In some congregations, candidates for baptism are asked to wait until a Sunday when other baptisms will be celebrated, while in other congregations, baptisms are celebrated as requests are approved by the Session.

The Session is also responsible for appointing when Holy Communion will be celebrated, based on local custom, need and the nature of the worship service. In some congregations, Holy Communion is celebrated four times a year. In other congregations, Holy Communion may be celebrated as many as 25 times a year, or more. It is advisable that the Session of each congregation occasionally reflect on the meaning of Holy Communion and consider whether the means and frequency of providing the sacrament is fitting for the evolving circumstances and needs of the congregation.



We attend a Presbyterian church in Florida, where the congregation reads lots of responses or reads prayers together instead of the minister leading prayers spontaneously off the top of his head. This is very different from what we do in our church in Canada. Why the difference?

Answered by the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald,
General Secretary

There is a remarkable diversity in the style and content of worship in Presbyterian congregations in Canada. It is as common to worship in a congregation that prays in unison and participates in many responses as it is common to be in a church where the minister leads all the prayers and does all the readings themselves. In some congregations, ministers spend time preparing prayers to recall and reflect the needs and experiences of the congregation and craft prayer-language in deliberate ways. In other congregations, ministers will let ideas and images stream into their mind as they are inspired. These differences are the re-

sult of the history, theology and preference of the congregation; and some differences reflect the theology, gifts and preferences of the minister.

Reading things in unison and having many responses by the congregation is relatively new in the PCC. For a long time, the congregation's participation in worship was restricted to singing hymns and possibly reading the psalms responsively. Over the last 50 years, there has been a movement to find more ways for the congregation to participate more actively in worship, lest congregations resemble passive audiences than a community of people called together to do the work and fulfill our corporate duty of worshipping God together.

I'm wondering about the types of music a congregation plays. My church doesn't play traditional hymns very often anymore. I like the new music, but is it a problem to move away from hymns? Is it the music director who gets to decide?

Answered by the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald,
General Secretary

Every congregation has its own signature musical identity. Hymns that one congregation thinks are standards are totally unknown to others. I had been in the PCC for over 30 years before I heard or sung "Blessed Assurance" (words by Fanny Crosby), which was an old favourite in the first congregation I was called to. Hymns like "Lord Jesus, You Shall be My Song" (by Les Petites Soeurs de Jésus) and "Lord, You Have Come by The Seashore" (words by Cesáreo Gabaráin) are standard for me but unknown in congregations I have served.

And then there is the contested matter of hymn tunes. I think it's normal to sing "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" to the "Blaenwern" by William P. Rowlands. But many of my friends and colleagues think it heresy to sing that same hymn to anything other than the Welsh tune "Hyfrydol." My great-grandparents had psalm books with pages literally cut halfway with words on the top and music on the bottom pages. It was normal to sing the words to one tune

one week and flip the pages and sing the same words to a different tune another week, depending on the mood and context of the service. In some respects, the 1800s was a more flexible time.

Generally, a thoughtful mix of familiar and new hymns is enjoyed by people in churches. Old hymns remind us of the long history of faith and how faith has been expressed differently over the ages. New hymns speak to our current situation and help us "sing a new song to the Lord" that reflects contemporary expressions of faith.

Section 111 of the Book of Forms teaches that, "As the executive of the presbytery, the minister is responsible for the conduct and content of public worship and for the supply of the pulpit." While the minister is ultimately responsible for all that is said and sung during worship, normally, the minister and organist, and perhaps others, will work together to select hymns that reflect the traditions and tastes of the congregation and that are suitable for the context of the service and reflective of the biblical texts chosen for the service. Generally, a thoughtful mix of familiar and new hymns is appreciated.

