



Serving the People of Nepal

By Beth McCutcheon, International Ministries, in conversation with Gerry and Lorna Kent

Why would a couple living in Cranbrook, B.C., who have had busy and productive lives, want to give up the freedom of retirement and the comforts of home to live and work in Nepal? Meet Gerald and Lorna Kent, who are embarking on a three-year volunteer appointment (beginning Sept. 1, 2025 – Aug. 31, 2028) with the PCC, supported by Presbyterians Sharing.

As former PCC mission staff, Gerry and Lorna and their five children lived in Nepal from 1992 to 1997 when Gerry served with United Mission to Nepal (UMN) as director, Engineering and Industrial Development Department. During those years, his work included overseeing organizations involved in irrigation, hydropower development, appropriate technology dissemination, apprenticeship training, water systems and forestry. He was also a member of UMN's senior management, overseeing programs in rural development, health care and education.

This September, Gerry embraces his new role as funding manager at the United Mission to Nepal headquarters in Kathmandu, a



Gerry Kent and language teacher Himal Shrestha, taken at UMN headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal.

longstanding partner of the PCC. Among other responsibilities, Gerry's new position includes assisting in developing and implementing plans to secure financial support from diverse sources such as individual donors, corporate sponsors and foundations; cultivating and stewarding relationships with existing and prospective donors to deepen their engagement and commitment to UMN and the UMN Medical and Development Trust; collaborating closely with internal stakeholders, including leadership clusters and hospitals and other relevant teams to align fundraising efforts with organizational priorities and goals.

So what drew Gerry to this new opportunity with UMN? Why do Gerry and Lorna want to return to Nepal? What hopes do Gerry and Lorna have for these next three years? I posed these questions to Gerry and Lorna via email, and here are their responses.

From Gerry:

Last Fall, I came to Nepal for what I described as my "goodbye trek." I wanted to visit places that held some special memories for me—the two Himalayan peaks I had climbed and where the first sod was turned for the Melamchi Project (more about that project later).

Before I left, I visited the UMN website, as I have occasionally done over the years, to get updated on their work. I also checked out the vacant positions for expatriates and noticed the funding manager position. Although I am a retired lawyer (having practiced in Cranbrook, B.C., for over 30 years), I thought that my work and experience might qualify me for the job. Part of my work as director in the 1990s was fundraising, which included raising one million dollars for a feasibility study for the Melamchi Project. While back in Canada, I also in-



Gerry and Lorna Kent.

stigated a Canadian International Development Agency-funded project under which the Canadian Bar Association gave assistance to the Nepal Bar Association in providing input during the drafting of Nepal's new constitution (which began in 2006 and was finally announced in 2015).

However, I also thought my legal skills might be helpful in the funding manager position as I would essentially be advocating for the poorest of the poor in Nepal, since that's the focus of UMN's work. Although I have been retired for seven years, I couldn't resist having them as my last client!

I was delightfully surprised when I wrote to UMN about the funding manager position to find out that Mitch Rhodes (who responded to my email as UMN's Expatriate Coordinator) was supported by the PCC, as is his spouse, Lora, who offers pasto-

ral and psychological support to UMN expatriates in her position.

I was very happy to find out that the PCC was still supportive of UMN's work. Mitch suggested Lorna and I approach the PCC about another secondment to UMN, which Lorna and I were happy to do as we had a very positive experience working for the PCC from 1992 to 1997. It was no different this time—Lorna and I have really appreciated the help and positive feedback the PCC has provided. Lorna and I are very much looking forward to being part of the PCC mission team again in our capacity as volunteers (with some much-appreciated financial support from the PCC).

Lorna and I love Nepal. It's a second home for us. Lorna also taught at Kathmandu International Study Centre (which has a strong informal connection with UMN) from 2009 to 2011, while

I divided my time between Nepal and Canada to maintain my law practice in Cranbrook. My Masters thesis (I obtained a Master of Laws degree from UBC in 2005) involved a close study of aspects of Nepal's legal system.

Over the past ten years, Lorna has dedicated herself to helping our youngest daughter, Rachel, and her husband (who live in Cranbrook) look after their three children. However, the youngest will be starting school in September and the eldest is now old enough to start caring for her younger siblings. Not as much "Nana care" is needed, including for our other six grandchildren who live in Calgary, Saskatoon and France.

One might ask, "What is UMN all about?" Essentially, it is supporting worthwhile Nepali efforts that alleviate poverty and suffering. Over the years, it has

Continued on page 3

Page 7...
The Church &
Affordable Housing

Page 10...
The 2025
General Assembly

Page 13...
Young Adult
Representatives

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Calling of Christ's Disciples Continues

By the Rev. Jeffrey Murray

This year, the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada gathered around two primary readings from scripture that resonated with commissioners at this moment in the life of the church in Canada. Many of the commissioners felt this was a threshold moment for the church, and while existential anxieties were articulated so too were sentiments of hope and possibility about the future.

Jeremiah 29:11 was the source of the Assembly's theme, "a future and a hope." Jeremiah's promise of a hopeful future was presented when the identity and viability of God's people in exile were threatened. God's people were displaced from their land and their temple that helped reinforce who they were and how they were to be. It was very tempting for God's people in captivity to swoon before false prophets, who promised a quick return to what felt familiar, to the point that their lives would be on hold. How easy it is for us to hold off or decline opportunities as we place our bets on a vision that turns out to be a mirage. Instead of doling out false hope, Jeremiah reminded the people that they can still be God's people in unfamiliar and even threatening circumstances. Their identity didn't depend on land and buildings but was revealed through their action and character. Jeremiah encouraged them not to hold out for return but to live, build, plant, marry, multiply where they are and to "seek the welfare of the city where [they are], and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare [they] will find [their] welfare." That was a threshold moment for the people of God, choosing between holding out for a possible return to what was, or to live in the present and build a future based on what it means to be God's people in a different landscape.

The second formative reading that guided commissioners and the young adult and student representatives as they discerned the way ahead came from John 20. The report of Assembly Council based its proposal for the church on John's post-resurrection stories, which were helpful reminders of the presence of Christ in the church and the church's calling to discipleship. The Assembly spent a significant amount of time



At St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Black River Bridge, N.B. Pictured (left to right) are Alex Newton (clerk of Session), Roberta MacDonald, Loisanne Grogan, Doreen Nicol (elder), the Rev. Jeffrey Murray, the Rev. Ross Wiseman (UCC minister who regularly provided worship leadership and pastoral care for the congregation), Brian Neilson (moderator of Presbytery of New Brunswick), Eileen Glendenning and Alton Glendenning (elder).

in prayerful discernment, discussion and debate around the "Narratives of Hope and Possibility" report. And while there was some disagreement and concern about how best to implement this work, it was clear that there is a recognition of the times we are living in. The reality of our situation was obvious to us all, given the shrinking number of members in congregations and how stretched elders and clergy are within presbyteries. Yet, the report and the Assembly's discussions reminded us that while we recognize the reality of our situation, faith and discipleship—not the times—define us. The watch words, based on the resurrection appearances in John's gospel, "Jesus shows up" and "Jesus sends us," hold true today just as they did in the difficult days of the early church.

The post-resurrection appearance of Christ among frightened disciples in John's gospel was also a threshold moment, when the call to ministry came amid an existential crisis, given that the disciples' leader had just been executed, along with their hopes and dreams of Jesus ushering in a new kingdom. They locked

themselves in a room out of fear. James Alison, in his book *Knowing Jesus*, describes the relationship of Jesus to the disciples as bringing them through scandals, or overcoming stumbling blocks, "even if only by the skin of their teeth." Jesus' strange teachings, his interactions with sinners, outsiders and the unclean, are examples of scandal. But the major stumbling block the disciples faced in their fear after Jesus' death was how to follow someone who died and when the mission appeared to have ended in failure? The resurrection, the words of peace, and Jesus' calling to send his disciples out to serve and proclaim the good news is what helped pull them beyond the locked door and to cross the threshold into their continued witness and service as Christ's disciples with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

While stories of desperation, dissolution of congregations and burnout were shared at Assembly, no one seemed to be doling out false promises of a return to a previous time of prosperity and growth, and there were no solutions or programs peddled to help

us be successful in the religious market. Instead, the Assembly wanted to take actions that would support our calling as disciples and to discern how best to live, build, plant and be the people of God in what is now a very different landscape. To move across the threshold from fear into joyful service.

One of the first services I attended as the Moderator of the 2025 General Assembly was at a service for dissolving St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Black River Bridge, N.B., where I serve as the interim moderator. These are sad occasions, yet it was a joyful celebration of the ministry and witness of the congregation that had begun its worship in their church building in July of 1930. During the service of dissolution, the scripture readings touched on the story of Abram who was called to go from the familiar country to a different land. Congregants were assured of the message from Romans that nothing can separate us from the Love of God in Jesus and reminded us of our calling as servants. While this was a period of transition, where the building was closed

and congregation dissolved, the calling of Christ's disciples continues, just in a different way.

It reminded me of another congregation's decision to sell its building in the Presbytery of New Brunswick, because the expenses of upkeep were impeding the congregation's ability to support ministry and mission. Nevertheless, the people still felt called to continue as a congregation. During that time of discernment, one of the elders frequently said, "God isn't finished with us yet." After worshipping in a different location for a time, that congregation eventually amalgamated with another congregation in the area. The place of worship changed, but God's call to serve remained steadfast.

During Assembly, we discussed and identified where we are, but what gave me hope is how scripture connected us with threshold moments—where God's people were reminded of who they were called to be, regardless of whether the territory is familiar or unfamiliar. God is faithful, Christ is among us, and the Spirit guides us to serve the world God loves.

Continued from page 1

nurtured the seeds and saplings of Nepal's educational, health, rural and infrastructure development sectors. UMN is an expert at judging what might work and what is worth supporting in what can seem like a bewildering array of development efforts.

I mentioned the Melamchi Project earlier. It began in 1992, when Nepali engineer Shiva Sharma told me that he believed the answer to Kathmandu's chronic water supply problem was to build a 20 km tunnel to divert water from the Melamchi river into the Kathmandu valley. UMN decided to support his idea. We raised one million dollars from the UNDP for a feasibility study (I served as team leader). We concluded the project was feasible and recommended to the government of Nepal that it be implemented. The government asked UMN to do so, but UMN declined, since it had decided to move away from implementing large infrastructure projects. However, the seed was planted.

During my trek last Fall, I met a young Nepali engineer. He told me that when Melamchi water recently arrived in their neighbourhood, there was a big celebration. It took the government of Nepal a long time to complete the project but now the project is supplying water to many areas of Kathmandu, including to the flat where Lorna and I will be living!

Chronic water supply problems, which Kathmandu suffered for many years, affects the poorest of the poor the most. Wealthier residents can pay for water to be trucked to their dwelling, but the poor do not have that option. Now that Melamchi water is available, the poor in Kathmandu have easier access to water.

United Mission to Nepal is still nurturing the seeds of development in Nepal. It's amazing how some of those seeds have grown



into key foundational pillars in Nepal's economy. The mission's work continues and is still worthy of our support. Lorna and I very much appreciate the opportunity to be a part of it again.

A note about the growth of the Christian church in Nepal. In the 1950s, there were only a handful of Nepali Christians living in Nepal. Now there are over one million. The growth has been almost solely the result of evangelical efforts of the Nepali Christians themselves, who, in the early years, often paid a heavy price for their efforts. However, their sacrifices and dedication led to perhaps the greatest evangelical success story of the 20th century.

United Mission to Nepal played a key role in this success by demonstrating God's love through its "good works," thereby enhancing the credibility of the message that Nepali Christians were communicating to their fellow Nepalis.

So, it turned out my "goodbye trek" was actually a "hello again trek"!

From Lorna:

When Gerry talked to me about the possibility of returning to Nepal with UMN, I was taken by surprise. My initial reaction was that it was far-fetched and, in all likelihood, wouldn't happen. After all, we are both in our early 70s and have been retired for quite

a while. I opted for the pray and wait approach, not dissimilar to the approach I took in the early '90's when, after returning from a climbing trip in Nepal, my husband discussed with me the possibility of taking our five children, ranging in age from 4 to 12 at the time, and participating in missionary work there. Working for the poor in a developing country had been something we had talked about throughout our marriage, but for it to become a reality seemed impossible to me.

Against all odds, we were accepted by United Mission to Nepal and sponsored by The Presbyterian Church in Canada to work as missionaries there. Then, as now, I have a sense of the miraculous. I am reminded of the words of an old hymn by William Cowper: "God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

Even in our later years, God through the Holy Spirit still directs and leads God's people to continue working, even in unexpected ways and places. Certainly, during our previous five years working with UMN, Gerry and I were led in unexpected and fruitful ways.

I am the unassigned spouse in this latest missionary endeavour. My hope is, first of all, to support my husband in any way that I can. As for anything else, I'll pray and wait and see where God leads. Perhaps I'll be surprised again.

To learn more about United Mission to Nepal, visit unm.org.np.



Gerry and Lorna Kent and their nine grandchildren, who they hope will visit them while they're in Nepal as mission staff.

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

The Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald,
Managing Editor
Barb Summers, Editor

Thank you to all volunteer contributing writers.

For questions and feedback, please email connection@presbyterian.ca or call 1-800-619-7301 ext. 243.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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



The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a community of over 750 congregations in Canada. presbyterian.ca/church-finder

Moderator of the General Assembly:

The Rev. Jeffrey Murray

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.



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



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

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

Residential School Denialism and Why Christians Should Reject It

By Allyson Carr, Justice Ministries

September 30 marks Orange Shirt Day, also known as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. It is a day to honour Survivors and intergenerational Survivors of Canada's Indian Residential School System, run by the federal government and churches, and to honour and remember those children who never made it home. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was an active participant in this intensely harmful system, operating 12 residential schools. The PCC has apologized for the trauma and other harms the schools caused to generations of Indigenous children and families and continues to commit itself to the work of reconciliation.

Although reconciliation is often concerned with more direct ways of redress or healing, another important part of reconciliation is rejecting forces seeking to deny or downplay the harmful nature of the schools. This denial or minimization of harms perpetrated through the schools is called residential school denialism.

Residential school denialism seeks to undermine the foundation of reconciliation. It minimizes or rejects the historical record, the accounts of Survivors and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. It also ignores or downplays other vital initiatives whose focus wasn't the schools themselves, but which nevertheless found links between the schools and ongoing issues facing Indigenous people today (such as are detailed in the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls). Such denialism refuses to see or admit the truths



that are spelled out plainly even in the church's own archives. The schools were *systemically*, not incidentally, harmful. They were intended to split up families and force assimilation. Even without any other abuse—and there was plenty of other abuse—that was fundamentally harmful on its own.

This October marks a year since Kimberly Murray, Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, released her final report. It included 42 Sacred Obligations providing a framework for truth, accountability and healing. An important theme in the Special Interlocutor's final report is how central the work of truth, and truth-seeking, is to healing and reconciliation. Because truth is such a major theme in the report, the report also addresses how residential school denialism manifests in Canada, observing that it doesn't outright deny the residential school system's existence; rather, it rejects or misrepresents basic facts about the schools—denying that they were tools of assimilation, stating that abuses were minimal, or making assertions such as that the schools “did lots of good too.”

These falsehoods deny the reality of the lasting harm the schools caused, undermine truth and reconciliation efforts and reinforce persistent myths or prejudices regarding Indigenous people. Recommendations put forward by both the National Indigenous Ministries Council and the Life and Mission Agency at the 2025 General Assembly, which were adopted, encouraged Presbyterians to read the final report the Special Interlocutor released.

Christians are called to hear—and to tell—the truth

Denialism deepens the harms the schools caused. It resists processes to establish and maintain an accurate public record of injustices, undermining public understanding of why reconciliation is needed. It downplays or excuses the intent of the schools as tools of assimilation, and diminishes or denies the ongoing intergenerational impacts of the schools. These actions and attitudes create additional harm not only through their denial of truth, but also because they contribute to a narrative that reconciliation isn't important or necessary. That narrative increases polarization within Canadian society and

across Indigenous-settler relations, while undermining efforts to establish necessary healing supports for Survivors and intergenerational Survivors.

In the preface of her final report, the Special Interlocutor wrote: “Collectively, Canadians can no longer be bystanders in reconciliation... A mature and healthy democracy is strengthened by its willingness and ability to confront the political, legal and moral failures of its own past and change accordingly” (p. viii). The Interlocutor's mention of a mature and healthy democracy is an important point to hear; nations and communities that cannot face and work to redress where they, collectively, have done significant harm are likely to repeat those same mistakes. When truth is devalued in one area it is not long before it is devalued in other areas too. And where truth continues to be devalued and denied, respect for such foundational issues as basic human rights and democratic processes wanes quickly. One does not need to look far to see examples of this today. Telling and hearing the truth—even and especially when it is a difficult truth—is a cornerstone of social cohesion and justice.

That reason alone should be enough to reject residential school denialism, but Christians have an additional reason, which is important to name here: the church confessed in 1994 that what we, the church, did at these schools was a misrepresentation of Christ. Acknowledging, not denying, that the church's actions were a misrepresentation of Christ is part of faithful witness today. Simply put, refusing to do so continues to misrepresent Christ in this world.

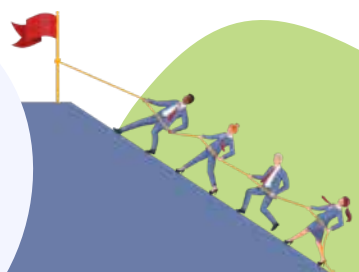
One of the five fundamental commitments the PCC made in its 2024 Apology for colonization and residential schools is: “We will listen to and tell the truth about the past.” Sometimes, listening to and telling truth is difficult, but the Reformed tradition has a history of acknowledging that sometimes the church does wrong—and that it is always in need of reform (*Living Faith* 7.1.6). We are better witnesses to the love Christ showed to the world when we face the harms we, individually or collectively, have been part of and work to repair them.

What can you do?

- Participate in local events for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
- Read the reports and listen to Survivor accounts.
- Learn about residential schools the PCC operated at presbyterianarchives.ca/narrative-history.
- Consider supporting the Honouring the Children fund: presbyterian.ca/honouring-the-children-fund.
- Learn more about the church's work for reconciliation and find resources at presbyterian.ca/indigenous-justice.

FREE LEADERSHIP WEBINARS AVAILABLE

Topics include funding opportunities, building a healthy and sustainable worshipping community, the candidacy process, money matters, and so much more!



presbyterian.ca/webinars

Ecumenical Church Statements on the Crisis in Palestine and Israel

The Presbyterian Church in Canada joins in prayer for the people of Palestine and Israel as they face war, danger and uncertainty. As the crisis in the region continues to unfold, the PCC has compiled links to statements issued from the Middle Eastern Council of Churches, the Priests of the Churches of Taybeh-Ramallah/Palestine, KAIROS Canada, and the World Council of Churches. A prayer and links to donate to support relief efforts are also available.

Visit presbyterian.ca/just-and-lasting-peace.

The Church and Biotechnology

By Katharine Sisk, Justice Ministries

The applications of biotechnology (the use of science and technology to change or manipulate biological organisms) are wide-ranging. Technological and scientific innovation has done much to improve societal well-being, and biotechnology is in the vanguard. In 2020, the Nobel Prize in chemistry was awarded to researchers for the discovery and development of CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing technology that allows scientists to precisely edit DNA sequences. This kind of development can have profound implications for such things as the treatment of genetic diseases, or the development of crop seeds that are more drought resistant in a warming climate.

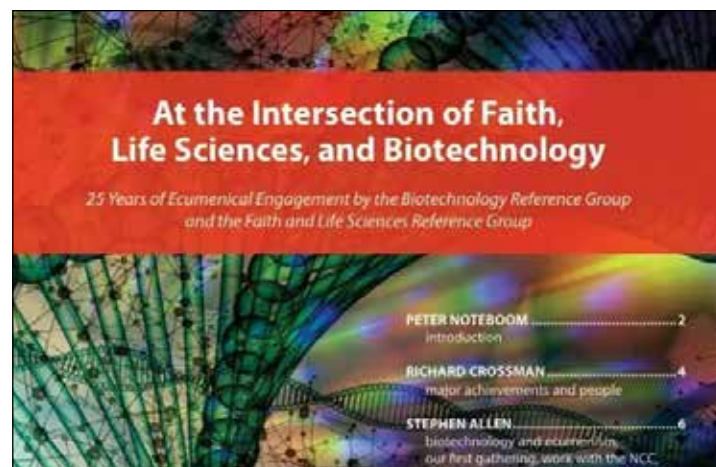
Such developments also raise

some profound questions about how, when, why and by whom such technologies are used, and to what end? Who benefits? What about unanticipated consequences? Are there limits that should be observed, and what are they? Who makes these decisions, and who is (and isn't) at the decision-making table? *Living Faith*, a subordinate standard of the church, recognizes the potential good that scientific development can have, stating: "Our care for the world must reflect God's care. We are not owners, but stewards of God's good earth. Concerned with the well-being of all life, we welcome the truths and insights of all human skill and science about the world and the universe" (2.4.1). It is not, however, an unqualified statement and places the welcoming of scientific innovation

within parameters of responsibility to care for the world in a way that reflects God's care of the world.

The complexity of biotechnology can be overwhelming, and the rate of scientific and technological development often means that the applications and uses of discovery outpace the imperative, and much slower, processes of ethical discernment, regulation and accountability, bringing to mind the adage "just because we can do something, doesn't mean we should." Neither is it a foregone conclusion that we shouldn't. But are we taking the time necessary to ask essential precautionary questions that are imperative for establishing ethical principles and developing guidance based on these principles for the use of such technologies? As people who are "concerned with the well-being of all life" (*Living Faith* 2.4.1), I think our faith calls us to such prudence.

The General Assembly has periodically commented on issues related to scientific development in life sciences. Responding to an overture raised after the first successful human heart transplant operation in 1967, the 1969 General Assembly adopted a report stating that heart transplants should be accepted as "a normal part of surgical practice" (A&P



1969, pp. 325). When cloning technology was first developed (some may remember Dolly the Sheep), the 2000 General Assembly adopted a report reflecting on some of the ethical dimensions of this technology, and adopted a recommendation that reproductive cloning of human beings should be banned by law (A&P 2000, pp. 336, 20). The 2013 General Assembly adopted a report that included a section that considered some of the implications of direct-to-consumer genetic testing. Assembly adopted a recommendation that the Moderator write to the federal government, seeking information about how Canada's laws ensure the genetic privacy of Canadians and asking for information about any additional legal protections under consideration at that time (A&P 2013, pp. 374, 19). The concern is apt: earlier in 2025, the genetic testing company 23andMe filed for bankruptcy, raising questions (and lawsuits) regarding what will happen to the genetic information the company collected from thousands of people who used their

services and products.

The ecumenical community has discerned a need for faith-based dialogue—and answering this need is a group within the Canadian Council of Churches called the Faith and Life Sciences Reference Group that brings together church representatives who are experts in fields such as medicine, technology and ethics. The group's work includes raising ethical questions through a faith-based lens and developing resources to help Christians (who may not be experts in biotechnology) understand and engage with these questions. A critical and timely focus of the group's current work is with the use and implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in biotechnology.

You can learn more about the work of the Faith and Life Sciences Reference Group online at councilofchurches.ca/biotechnology. You can learn more about the Presbyterian church's statements regarding biotechnology and related issues on the Social Action Hub, online at presbyterian.ca/biotechnology.



National Housing Day: A Day to Reflect on Seniors and Aging

By Ainsley Chapman, Executive Director, Evangel Hall Mission

One of the most upsetting trends that Canada is seeing is the rising number of seniors who are unhoused. At Evangel Hall Mission (EHM), we are seeing more seniors become regulars at our drop-in centre, seeking food, showers, clean clothes and incontinence supplies. In our residences, the tenants who have lived there for many years are aging, while the average age of new tenants is going up. Why is this happening? The first rea-

son is simply statistics, as Baby Boomers make up a very large portion of society. But more concerning is the fact that seniors are becoming newly homeless at rapid rates. Seniors are losing their housing to renovictions or are facing unaffordable rent hikes while on fixed incomes. Many seniors find themselves unable to make ends meet once their partner passes away. And for those who were unable to save for retirement, they simply can't afford housing once they can no longer work.

Agencies like EHM aren't just

working to create affordable housing for seniors but also to make sure that seniors can access *social* and *spiritual* supports where they live. Like churches that have housing, we have the opportunity to create community, foster social connections, and make sure that everyone can build friendships. Because home is more than four walls, and life is more than the number of years one lives. This National Housing Day, EHM is looking at how the housing crisis impacts seniors, and how we can ensure that everyone can live and age with dignity.



Because of EHM housing, Doris has a beautiful home where she cooks, plays guitar, tends to the EHM garden and volunteers.

Stewarding Church Properties



Over 20 Presbyterians participated in the Reimagine: Church, Land, Community Conference.



By Karen Plater, Stewardship

Many congregations are grappling with what to do with their church buildings, some of which cost a lot to run and maintain and are underutilized through the week. Over the past decade, thousands of churches in Canada have closed and it is anticipated that even more churches will have to decide what to do with their buildings in the future. Redevelopment is about exploring the ways we steward the property and building resources congregations have been gifted, in the same way we

steward gifts of time and treasure—finding ways that they can be used in God’s mission effectively.

The “Reimagine: Church, Land, Community Conference,” held at Wycliffe College in Toronto, Ont., in May, provided alternatives to closing church buildings and selling to the highest bidder. Case studies were shared about congregations that have developed parking lots into affordable housing projects, and others that have become community hubs, while also preserving space for worship. Redevelopment isn’t about making money, it’s about finding ways to serve God’s mission.

This conference brought together congregational leaders with urban planners, architects, Indigenous peoples and non-profit housing developers. Attendees included people from Presbyterian, United, Anglican, Christian Reformed, Baptist, Missionary Alliance, Pentecostal and other traditions. Over 20 people from Presbyterian congregations across Canada joined the con-

versation, sharing their stories and exploring their options. They included clergy and lay leaders, professionals working in the field, denominational staff and people who had recently helped redevelop congregational properties.

At the conference, speakers explored how churches can redevelop their spaces to help address the housing crisis and provide affordable spaces for community gatherings and programs, serving social needs like education, food security and addictions. Ainsley Chapman, PCC redevelopment consultant and executive director of Evangel Hall Mission, outlined how working with professionals on feasibility studies and pre-development initiatives can free up church members to focus on ministry.

Jennifer Keesmaat, a renowned urban planner and former chief city planner for Toronto who has helped faith groups redevelop church land, challenged everyone to consider how, as we densify our cities, “we protect and enhance community infrastructure

and preserve vital social functions.” Jennifer urged people to work together to enhance community amenities and ensure there are spaces for social, spiritual and community use—spaces churches have so often provided. While she encouraged redevelopment, she noted that every circumstance is different and cautioned that redevelopment takes time and includes substantial risk, but it can be worth it. “The biggest enemy [in development] is greed,” she cautioned, as she encouraged congregations to develop capacity to support and learn from one another.

Karen Robbins from St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Lethbridge, Alta., wrote: “The presentations were very thought-provoking and our conversations with other participants were also meaningful. We came home energized. Everything from my watching of the PCC webinar (Re) Developing Church Property/ Building, to email conversations, to the Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod retreat where we discussed



the PCC’s Narrative of Hope and Possibility document seems to be aligned to help St. Andrew’s consider its mission within the City of Lethbridge.”

John Barrett, a church elder and the new associate secretary of Congregational and Community Ministries, who attended with his minister, the Rev. Kirk MacLeod and elder Ken Heckbert, wrote: “There were many great ideas shared and new contacts made as together we consider our future building and land plans at Zion Presbyterian Church in Prince Edward Island.”

Grant Program to Help Congregations Explore Redevelopment

At their spring meeting, the PCC’s Assembly Council approved that \$2.5 million from the PCC’s New and Renewing Ministries Fund would be allocated to assist congregations considering projects to redevelop their buildings and property to better participate in God’s mission. Grants of up to \$75,000 are available to congregations to conduct feasibility and pre-development studies to determine the possibilities their building could realistically serve. A small advisory group working under the Life and Mission Agency, supported by PCC staff Karen Plater and Ainsley Chapman and PCBC Chief Operating Officer Betty Kupeian, has been tasked to support congregations navigating these processes and distribute the grants.

In June, over six grants, ranging from \$10,000 to \$75,000, were approved. Projects already include: exploring expanding affordable student housing; developing supportive housing for people with disabilities; adding deeply affordable housing to church lands; and redeveloping a church property to provide more space for community events and non-profit rentals.

The grant program is about more than renovating an existing building to better serve the congregation, it is a revisioning and reworking of buildings and property to maximize service to the community. A feasibility study helps the congregation clearly connect their building to the congregation’s mission/vision, analyze the current human and funding resources available, map out options, and develop preliminary implantation plans based on information gathered by professionals. By identifying community needs and congregational assets and strengths and weaknesses, the studies can also identify potential partnerships with other community players and non-profits as well as funding from municipal, provincial and federal governments, foundations, and others to help make dreams reality.

Grant terms, applications and a template Request for Proposal to conduct a feasibility study are posted at presbyterian.ca/funds. The committee will be meeting monthly in the autumn and winter to approve grants as needs arise.

The Church and Affordable Housing



By the Rev. Neil Ellis, Centerville-Harmony Ecumenical Shared Ministry in South Monaghan, Ont.

November 22 is National Housing Day and throughout many communities in Canada, there is a growing lack of affordable housing. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation estimates that an average of 480,000 new housing starts are needed over the next decade to restore affordability nationwide (see cmhc-schl.gc.ca, “Housing shortages in Canada”). It’s important to note that this figure encompasses all housing types, not just affordable units.

For The Presbyterian Church in Canada, this raises a crucial question: How can we leverage our properties to help address this pressing need? How can congregations—both thriving and those considering closure—contribute to providing affordable housing? It’s a daunting prospect. As the saying goes, “Blessed are those who plant trees under whose shade they will never sit.” While inspiring, embarking on a housing development journey is complex, with many legal, financial and pastoral considerations.

The “why” behind church involvement in housing is clear. Developing housing allows church land to continue serving the social good and aligns with the church’s mission to serve the vulnerable. For congregations nearing the

end of their lifecycle, developing affordable housing can be a powerful way to maximize social impact and leave a legacy.

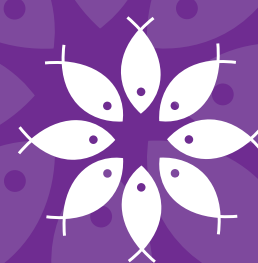
A critical decision for any congregation is whether to retain ownership of the property or to sever part of the land and allow a third party to develop and operate the housing. The latter option is simpler for congregations, and while the sale of land could provide financial benefit, it means parting with property, which some congregations may be reluctant to do. However, developing and operating housing directly presents numerous challenges. From the initial commitment, the pre-construction phase alone can take up to five years, with construction adding several more years. Building housing is, regrettably, not a quick process.

Another significant question is whether the congregation will operate the housing units themselves. While it’s natural for churches to demonstrate pastoral concern for those in need of housing, acting as a landlord introduces legal responsibilities to all tenants that can conflict with pastoral inclinations. Even if a third-party company is hired to operate the units while the church retains ownership, careful consideration is still required about the relationship that is developed with tenants.

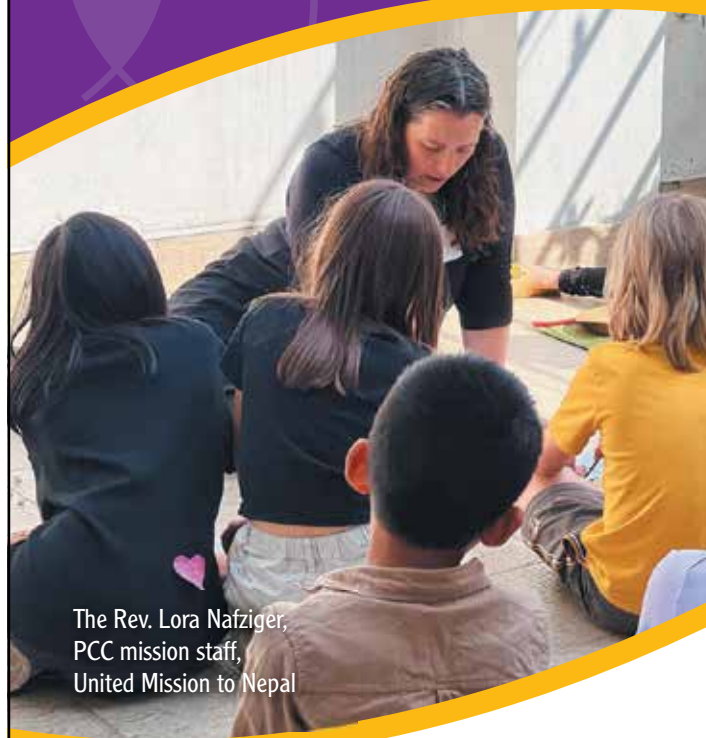
A successful housing project is deeply rooted in community

engagement. While the need for housing, especially affordable housing, is widely acknowledged, what might be surprising is that communities surrounding churches may not welcome “that type of housing” nearby. For example, Tyndale University in Toronto faced significant local opposition to its plans to develop over 1,500 housing units, half of which would be affordable. (The *Toronto Star* ran an article about this project and pointed out that some locals call the plan “sacrilegious.”) As someone involved in housing advocacy and who has managed a homeless shelter, I’m consistently astonished by local opposition to helping our most vulnerable. When considering housing development, be prepared to address community concerns about density, traffic, parking and the overall character of the neighbourhood.

As followers of Christ, we are called to radical hospitality. The development of affordable housing is a tangible manifestation of God’s kingdom. It represents responsible stewardship of the property entrusted to us and demonstrates the church’s awareness of the pressing issues facing our communities. We understand the profound impact that providing housing will have. With open minds and hearts, diligent planning, and unwavering faith, we can move forward on this vital issue.



Presbyterians
Sharing



The Rev. Lora Nafziger,
PCC mission staff,
United Mission to Nepal

Living Faith Together

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

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

YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT Presbyterians Sharing

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

Please provide the following credit card information:

Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐

Credit card #: _____

Expiry date: _____

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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



The Presbyterian Church in Canada
presbyterian.ca

Hope, Justice and Action

KAIROS at the G7 People's Forum

*By the Rev. Laurie McKay,
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
in Calgary, Alta.*

In June, KAIROS Canada proudly joined civil society partners, faith communities and global justice advocates at the G7 People's Forum in Calgary, Alta. This powerful gathering—hosted on Treaty 7 territory—brought together voices from across Canada and around the world in a unified call for economic justice, climate action and Indigenous rights.

Held in the lead-up to the G7 Leaders' Summit in Kananaskis, the Forum featured faith and Indigenous dignitaries, global partners, community-building, learning, prayer and public action in support of global and ecological debt justice. As part of the local arrangements committee of the People's Forum, I happily brought greetings from the Rev. Jeffrey Murray, Moderator of the 2025 General Assembly. The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a member of KAIROS and contributed a

grant to sponsor this important conference.

Highlights from the event included: a pre-conference youth forum, an opening interfaith worship led by the Calgary Interfaith Council and interactive workshops. Guest speakers included: Cardinal Pedro Barreto from Peru, President of the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon, who presented on ecological and human rights in the Amazon; Salome Owuonda from Kenya, Executive Director at the Africa Centre for Sustainable and Inclusive Development; and Tarek Al-Zoughbi from Palestine, Project and Youth Coordinator at Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center, based in the West Bank.

The event also educated us on the Stoney Nakoda Medicine Wheel in a talk from the Rev. Tony Snow, a member of the Stoney Nakoda First Nation and a minister in the United Church of Canada. Participants were also able to join in a G7 march for economic justice in downtown Calgary with



Participants of the G7 People's Forum rallied together in Calgary to support Jubilee 2025 and demand urgent debt cancellation and global financial reform. The conference was held at Ambrose University and supported by the PCC.

hundreds of other protestors. This was the first march I had ever participated in! Together, we stepped out with courage and faith that God will use our small, informed actions to change the world.

At the heart of KAIROS' presence was the "Jubilee 2025: Turn Debt into Hope" campaign. With banners raised and voices united, participants declared their support for debt cancellation and systemic reform, urging G7 nations to heed the moral and economic call for justice. The forum served as both a strategic moment and a moral witness, amplifying the urgent need to address the global debt crisis. This isn't just an economic crisis—it's a moral one. Debt cancellation is rooted in the Biblical concept of Jubilee—a time of liberation, land restoration and justice for the oppressed. KAIROS affirms that today's debt systems, shaped by colonial extraction and global inequality, must be transformed. In many countries, debt repayments far outweigh spending on health, education or addressing

the impacts of the climate crisis, standing in the way of sustainable development. For heavily indebted countries, public debt has grown so large that repayment is impossible, burdening future generations.

Meanwhile, wealthy countries, including Canada, and corporations exploit resources from heavily indebted countries and from Indigenous communities, causing human rights violations and severe ecological harm. This creates an "ecological debt" owed to those countries and to Indigenous peoples.

This can change. Public, private and multilateral creditors must cancel or reduce debts, and political leaders must support a multilateral framework for debt resolution. This would be a transformative shift for billions of people, moving us from a model focused on profit and enriching creditors to one that prioritizes a just society, centring people and the planet.

With over 40,690 global supporters already signed on, our



Elder Ruth from Stoney Nakoda Nation and Gloria Snow leading opening prayers at KAIROS G7 People's Forum.

goal is to gather 200,000 signatures worldwide by the end of 2025. Join us! Add your name to the Jubilee 2025 petition today and help us turn debt into hope. Visit kairoscanada.org/jubilee-2025-canada to sign and share. Worship resources, slide presentations and preaching aids are also available in the Animator's Toolkit. Together, we can build a future of justice, dignity and sustainability for all.



The G7 People's Forum march for economic justice in downtown Calgary.



A visit to Stoney Nakoda First Nation with the Rev. Tony Snow.



Photos from the Exceptional Family Ministry at Amberlea Presbyterian Church.

Making the Dream a Reality for Families with Autism

*By Shelly Wedge, Exceptional Family Ministries Coordinator,
Amberlea Presbyterian Church in
Pickering, Ont.*

Over 15 years ago, our family was looking for a place to worship, but unfortunately there were no programs that would support

our children on the autism spectrum, specifically our son, who struggles with many more challenges. Our family wanted to worship God within a faith-based community, but it was extremely difficult with the barriers that our children faced. For us, we were concerned about how our son

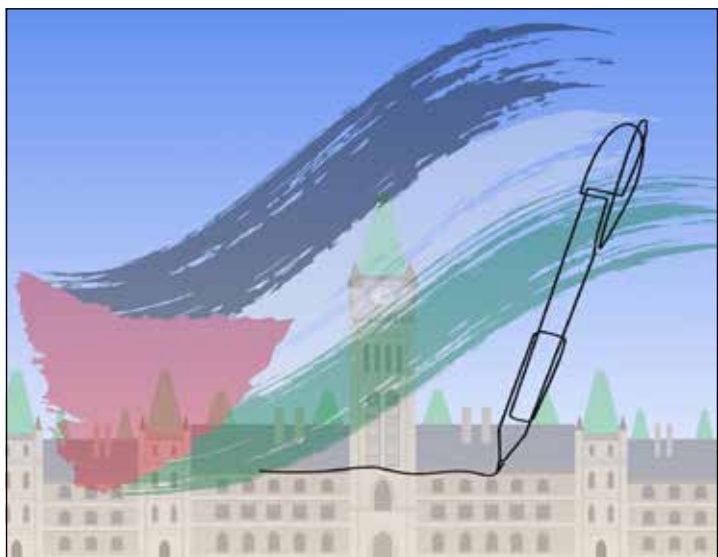
might respond to others, and how they might respond to him. We would always drive two cars to church, so that if one of us had to leave, the other one could stay and worship. In the beginning, one of us would go downstairs for KidZone (children's worship) with our son to keep him on track

and to support him in his learning. Eventually, we hired one of our son's therapists to come on Sunday mornings so that both of us would be able to worship.

According to the Autism Alliance of Canada, there are currently 1 in 37 children diagnosed with

Continued on page 9

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives



By the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr, First Presbyterian Church, Brockville, Ont., and member of the KAIROS Canada Steering Committee

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives (KAIROS) is an ecumenical, faith-based justice organization with an aim to effect social change through advocacy, education and research programs in Indigenous rights, ecological justice, gender justice, migrant rights and prophetic witness.

Ten participating member denominations and religious organizations (including The Presbyterian Church in Canada) are

involved in the development and delivery of KAIROS' shared work. KAIROS was established on July 1, 2001, with its foundations in the work of 10 previous Canadian ecumenical coalitions. The PCC joined KAIROS to further increase its advocacy for social change, thereby amplifying and strengthening the public witness of its members. The PCC current has two members on the KAIROS Steering Committee: Donna Wilkinson and the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr.

In addition to its participating member denominations and religious organizations, KAIROS

partners with faith-based and human right organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East as well as grassroots groups across Canada and the efforts of many other organizations, churches and individuals. This enables KAIROS to continue to be on the cutting edge of justice advocacy and increasing awareness of global human rights issues. Through KAIROS, Canadians of faith work together for extraordinary change!

Gaza letter-writing campaign

In addition to the Jubilee 2025 campaign for global debt reduction and ecological justice, KAIROS has been a clarion voice for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. This includes the 2024 Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage to Ottawa (in which many Presbyterians participated) to the current letter-writing campaign (kairoscanada.org/gaza-letter-campaign) demanding the Canadian government institute a full arms embargo and make all efforts to bring about a diplomatic and lasting peace in Gaza.

Call to withdraw Bill C-2

KAIROS has joined with the Migrant Rights Network to call on the



Carney government to withdraw Bill C-2, which is against Canada's commitments under international law and permits potential deportation of migrants and asylum-seekers without due process. The PCC has long advocated for the rights of migrants and asylum-seekers in Canada, which stem from the biblical injunction to love and protect the "foreigner" and "stranger" in our midst. KAIROS encourages individuals to write to the Canadian government and their MP (migrantrights.ca/action-slist/stopc2) to oppose Bill C-2.

Update on the KAIROS Blanket Exercise

Many Presbyterians have taken part in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise since it was first developed in 1996, with the most recent version released in 2016. The Blanket Exercise is currently in the process of being updated to ensure that it reflects the voices of Indigenous people and that its content is decolonized. It is part of a larger effort by KAIROS to ensure its In-

digenous Rights advocacy efforts are led by Indigenous persons.

Changes to KAIROS' status and new executive director

KAIROS is currently being administered as a program of the United Church of Canada, but to further expand its ability to respond and advocate, KAIROS is restructuring to become a stand-alone organization with its own charitable status. KAIROS will remain a joint ecumenical venture supported by its member denominations and religious organizations.

KAIROS recently hired a new full-time Executive Director, Tania Principe, who is a seasoned non-profit leader and organization builder with over two decades of experience advancing gender justice, human rights and systemic equality. Tania replaces Transitional Executive Director Leah Reesor-Keller, who guided KAIROS through several significant transitions, including the move toward KAIROS' being a separate charitable entity.

KAIROS continues to evolve and grow in response to our ever-changing world and the marginalized voices it seeks to amplify. In the words of former PCC Associate Secretary for Justice Ministries Stephen Allen, "For the churches and organizations that make up KAIROS, there is the shared commitment to faithfully live out the gospel call to seek justice. This is KAIROS' mandate."

This continues to be KAIROS' mandate, and you are encouraged to learn more about and take part in its faithful action for justice and peace. Visit kairoscanada.org to get involved.

Continued from page 8

autism in Canada each year (see autismalliance.ca). Many families feel isolated and judged, and therefore cannot attend church because of the barriers and lack of support at churches. Those on the autism spectrum have very specific needs and often cannot just be left in a group of neurotypical children without the proper understanding and support.

As parents of children with autism, we actively pursued worship engagement and faith development for our family in a Christian community and approached Amberlea Presbyterian Church in Pickering,



Ont., to start a ministry to support families like ours. Amberlea Church came alongside us by hiring a trained support therapist to serve on Sunday mornings—and provided a safe and welcoming environment, including a sensory room, for exceptional children. Amberlea and its entire congregation fully support all these programs through the church budget, annual fundraising, grants and volunteering. This made such a difference not only for our family but for others attending on Sunday mornings, so the parents could worship knowing that their children were safe and could participate and engage in ways that were meaningful to them.

Amberlea Church expanded the Exceptional Family Ministry to include a new program called F.A.C.E. (Fun Autism Community Experiences). This safe, welcoming program runs twice monthly

on Saturday afternoons and provides fun, social experiences for children and teens on the autism spectrum. It started with three families and is now in its third year providing service to 17 families. This program also has trained support staff and volunteers so that the program can run smoothly with proper support in place. Parents need respite, and with this program they feel confident they can leave their children safely and are grateful that their children can attend with no judgement.

Some responses to the F.A.C.E. program: "My daughter gets here and never wants to leave!" and "My son will smile and say, 'Bye mom, you can go now.'"

Also, Amberlea Church offers a low-cost, fun summer camp in our community. Most recently, the congregation was able to make these camps accessible for children with autism, which is



incredible! We provide a trained therapist and staff who can accommodate all their needs.

As a parent of two young adults with autism, I am so grateful to Amberlea Church for bringing to life what was a dream for us to worship as a family! Together, we live out the church's vision: Lov-

ing God, Sharing Hope and Growing Together in Christ.

To learn more about our Exceptional Family Ministries program at Amberlea Church, email shelly@amberleachurch.ca or read Shelly's Exceptional Families blog at amberleachurch.ca/exceptional-families.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

150 Years of Faith



Participants of the 2025 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

By Callie Long and Heather Chappell, Communications Office

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's 150th anniversary naturally encourages us to reflect on the past. Yet, it also serves as a time to consider future directions as the denomination faces change, societal shifts, and renewed calls for justice and reconciliation in a world marked by geopolitical instability and tensions. Within this context, the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, held in Hamilton, Ont., this year, marked notable mile-

stones for the denomination, which evoked both gratitude and a need for discernment. Instead of merely commemorating its history, the PCC opted to reimagine its witness in an era of evolving spiritual landscapes and to contemplate what it means to be a faithful, missional church today and into the future.

The Assembly Council's Working Group on Narratives of Hope and Possibility provided a framework for reflection, offering a way to envision changes to structures and programs. It follows two years of work that had begun with

commissioners sharing stories of hope in table group discussions during the 2023 and 2024 Assemblies. The report focused on leadership, resources and structure, grounded in the hope that a focus on these areas would lead to transformation for the church. Key to the discussions was a decision to appoint a special commission for a two-year term to facilitate the proposals outlined in the report. Known as the Change Leadership Team, it will collaborate with other courts of the church to help bring about desired and suitable changes.

Another significant moment was the International Affairs Committee report, which included updates on decisions made by previous Assemblies regarding Palestine. In addressing this year's Assembly, Corey Balsam, National Coordinator of Independent Jewish Voices Canada, outlined the atrocities committed by the Israeli government against Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, driven by "voices" that no longer represent fringe ideology and a "genocidal mindset that has infected Israeli society." Following

the presentation, commissioners adopted various recommendations, including that the PCC use "practical tools for peace to take concrete actions related to boycotting goods and services (including financial investments) that support the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territory and resultant economic oppression of the Palestinian people."

A future and a hope

General Assembly opened on June 1, with commissioners and guests gathered at Central Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont. In her sermon, the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Moderator of the 2024 General Assembly, preached on Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14. She compared the church in Jeremiah's time with today's church, stating that God continues to reach out with words of challenge, instruction and the good news of Jesus Christ. She concluded by asking, "Will we trust that God will give us a future and a hope?"

During the first sederunt, the Rev. Jeffrey Murray was elected and installed as Moderator of the 2025 General Assembly of the PCC. Pat's report to the Assembly highlighted her work with the Assembly Council's Working Group on Narratives of Hope and Possibility as a significant highlight of her year as Moderator. The project took her across Canada, where she conducted 11 workshops, both in person and online, engaging with 273 people from 123 congregations throughout the year. The workshops aimed to



The Moderator, the Rev. Jeff Murray.



The Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls.

"create conversations to inspire, imagine and innovate the future." Pat also spoke about meaningful visits to Malawi and with Indigenous communities.

Acting together in mission and ministry

Following last year's adoption of the Apology to Indigenous People, the Apology Special Committee acknowledged both the complexity of the work and the sensitivity required to accomplish such work. The committee recognized the Dakota Language Keepers and Translators (Marilyn Hall and Evelyn Pratt), who translated the church's Apology into



Yvonne Bearbull and the Rev. Mary Fontaine.



The Young Adult Representatives with the Moderator.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Corey Balsam, National Coordinator for Independent Jewish Voices Canada, speaks to the Assembly.

Dakota. The emotional and spiritual challenges the translation work entailed were acknowledged, and the importance of preserving and promoting Indigenous languages as a way of respecting Indigenous nations was underscored.

Former Moderator the Rev. Mary Fontaine reminded people of the five fundamental commitments enshrined in the Apology, that as the PCC, we will: continue to listen and learn from Indigenous people, leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, welcoming and engaging voices from both within and beyond the PCC; respect traditional Indigenous spiritual practices; continue the work of reconciliation, responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and the work of reparation that we have begun; listen to and tell the truth about the past; work to support Indigenous-led healing and wellness initiatives and be in solidarity with Indigenous people and communities.

The Assembly set aside time to mark 150 years of faith and service as The Presbyterian Church in Canada with a musi-

cal celebration and the launch of *Recollections + Reflections*, a new book that is a collection of memories from Presbyterians, both living and deceased. The editor, Ian McKechnie, noted that "authorship belongs to you as a denomination."

Threaded throughout the Assembly's discussions and discernment were the voices of the Young Adult Representatives (YARs). When their turn came to address the Assembly, the YARs spoke about their experiences of the hope and spirit they found in "debate that was lively, thoughtful and safe"; the hope of walking alongside and respecting other communities; the hope that comes with our work with refugees as a "beacon of passion and courage in a world where walls are going up" and in the recommendations related to Indigenous people as the PCC works toward reconciliation and healing.

Updates from the 2025 General Assembly can be found at presbyterian.ca/ga2025, including an image gallery and video clips.



The London Korean Christian Church Choir performing as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations.

The Cutting Edge of Mission Award: Friends of Prison Ministry, Malawi

The Cutting Edge of Mission Award recognizes individuals and organizations that think and act outside the box. These are the prophetic voices that call for justice and action—people who have a vision and passion for what is possible when others see only impossibility. In some cases, they are lone voices, speaking at significant personal risk and sacrifice.

This year, the annual award recognized the work of Friends of Prison ministry, which strives to plant seeds of hope in prisons in Malawi. Prisoners lack basic necessities and struggle

with sickness and disease, poor hygiene and limited clean water and food. They live with the fear that they have been forgotten by their country, their families and even God. This ministry brings the hope and the love of God, as found in Jesus, into these often-desperate places in which some 6,000 people, including children, are incarcerated.

Unable to attend the Assembly in person to accept the award, the Rev. Hastings Phale, a member of the ministry team, sent a message of gratitude via video, saying that: "In Malawi, many people live



The Rev. Hastings Phale with Friends of Prison ministry in Malawi.

below the poverty line," so when they are incarcerated, "they come from a difficult life into *another* difficult life" and are "dehumanized."

Special Guests



Rev. Tsung-Jen Wang

During his presentation, the **Rev. Tsung-Jen Wang**, vice-Moderator of the 70th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, thanked the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean for his decades of work on Bible translation with Indigenous ministry teams in Taiwan.

The Rev. Jihyun Oh, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Executive Director of the



The Rev. Jihyun Oh

Interim United Agency of the Presbyterian Church (USA), noted with interest how the PCC is answering the call to be the church today, as PC(USA) is trying to answer the same question within its own context.

The Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, General Secretary (Interim) of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, addressed the Assembly in a video. He stated that,



The Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi

as the PCC celebrates this year, "The work on narratives of hope and possibility will be an inspirational tool that propels The Presbyterian Church in Canada into new heights of leadership in an era in which the larger society is experiencing despair and sensing walls and closed doors that deny people and creation the fullness of life for which our Lord Jesus Christ came." PHOTO CREDIT: EPUC.EDU.GH



Opening worship.

Appreciation for Faith in Service

The Assembly recognized several people for their service in the church.



Kim Arnold

Kim Arnold retired from her position as Archivist and Records Administrator, having served the PCC for 44 years.

The Rev. Don Muir will retire as Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly at the end of September. He will have served for over 22 years as Deputy Clerk and an additional 23 years in congregational ministry within the PCC.

Terrie-Lee Hamilton will retire at the end of 2025 after more than 35 years as Senior Administrator of the General Assembly. During those years, Terrie-Lee has worked with four Principal Clerks and four Deputy Clerks. She has also con-



The Rev. Don Muir

nected with countless clerks of presbyteries and synods during this time.

James Waddell was appointed as Interim CFO/Treasurer of the PCC in 2023. He brought with him many gifts in the financial area and helped to transition the Support Services department of the national office into a new context. James completed his appointment at the end of June.

The Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald retires as professor of History and a member of the Knox College faculty after roughly 29 years. Stuart's research interests and publications focus on both 17th century Scotland and



Terrie-Lee Hamilton

contemporary religion in Canada, particularly religious demography and history related to the PCC.

The Rev. Dr. Paul McLean was recognized on his retirement for his joyful, diligent and decades-long service to Christ and the church through his Bible translation work in Taiwan. While translating the scriptures, he worked closely with Indigenous colleagues on various translation teams. The Elders and communities, whose generosity of time, sharing of their traditional language and knowledge made the translation initiative possible, were also thanked with profound gratitude.



James Waddell



The Rev. Dr. Stuart MacDonald



The Rev. Dr. Paul McLean

King Charles III Coronation Medal

During General Assembly, the Rev. Stephen Kendall was presented with the King Charles III Coronation Medal. Canada awarded 30,000 medals to individuals who made significant contributions to the country or achieved accomplishments that brought credit to Canada. Stephen served as Principal Clerk of the PCC for 24 years and held leadership positions with the Canadian Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches.



The Rev. Stephen Kendall

New Associate Secretary for Congregational and Community Ministries

John Barrett has been named as the new Associate Secretary for Congregational and Community Ministries (formerly Canadian Ministries), starting July 21. He will work alongside colleagues to support and equip the church's ministries.



John Barrett

John has extensive experience in the areas of finances, communication, team building and administration. He served as Clerk of Session at Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I., for 16 years, and has been a member of the Assembly Council, Life and Mission Agency, and Finance Committee. He is a member of the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island and occasionally provides pulpit supply. He has been serving as Clerk of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces since January 2024 and has served General Assembly as Convener of Business on three occasions, along with other GA committee assignments.

The full announcement can be found at presbyterian.ca. John can be reached at jbarrett@presbyterian.ca.

New Deputy Clerk

The Assembly Council has appointed the Rev. Jeffrey Murray as the next Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly, effective Aug. 1.

Jeff holds degrees from Carleton University, Knox College and the Atlantic School of Theology/Saint Mary's University. He has been the minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sackville, N.B., since 2007, and he currently serves as Moderator of the PCC. Jeff has served as the Clerk of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces for six years and as Moderator of both the Presbytery of New Brunswick and the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces. He has supported national church committees and was a member of the Assembly Council.

The Rev. Don Muir, current Deputy Clerk, will retire at the end of September. Jeff can be reached at jmurray@presbyterian.ca.



The Rev. Jeff Murray



Moderators of the PCC, past and present.



Commissioners stand for worship.

The YAR Experience:

My Voice Had an Impact



Jay McDonald-Lee addresses the Assembly.

By Jay McDonald-Lee, Camp Kintail in Goderich, Ont.

This year, I had the honour of representing the Presbytery of Huron-Perth at the 150th General Assembly. The Young Adult Representatives (YARs) arrived a day early. Going in, I was not quite sure what to expect. Arriving a day early allowed me to settle in and get a chance to meet the other YARs in a less formal setting than the sederunt would prove to be. It also provided us with a chance to receive instruction on what we would actually be doing during the meetings.

Opening worship was a joy to attend. It was a delightful way to start off the event. The moment we all started to sing the first hymn, and we filled that space,

is a moment I will remember for a long time. Often, when I hear people discuss the Presbyterian church, it is not positive—it's about how we are shrinking and dying. In that moment, though, I knew we were and are alive. It was beautiful.

In the following days and across three sederunts, I spoke to Assembly five times—three times towards an amendment I would put forward, once in favour of an LMA motion, and then in the YAR report. After reading the summarized reports to commissioners, I knew I wanted to make an amendment. The YAR Coordinator, Jessica Foy, helped me through the process. I, and many of the other young adults, had positive experiences at Presbyterian camping and conference centres and felt it was important for the church to prioritize all those spaces. The conversation my amendment generated was both anxiety-inducing and made me confident. Part of what made the experience of the amendment so special was the number of people afterwards who came to thank me, offered to help, or said that they appreciated the spirit of it. It made me feel more sure of my actions. Surprisingly, I was not anxious going up to speak at the microphone. In the moment, I

do not think I would have said the Holy Spirit moved me, but looking back it is a description that fits.

All the guest speakers and opening worships were a needed and thoughtful reprieve from legislation, and they helped ground me over the course of what felt like a whirlwind of discussion. The type of discussion that occurred was also striking. People disagreed with each other, but kindly. It did not feel like people were working against each other, but instead like we were one church trying to discern the best decision possible. It felt like we were Team Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Going in, I knew the YARs had an advisory vote but was unsure



if it would feel important or like a token effort to include us. It felt important. There was something immensely powerful about the whole Assembly—people with decades more experience with the church and in life, looking towards us to see what we thought. It truly felt like my voice and vote had an impact.

Finally, I cannot talk about General Assembly without talking about the amazing young adults

that I met. Although we did not always agree on everything, and it was hard to manage in the moment, I believe that the disagreement made the group stronger and more representative of our church. It meant we had advisory votes on the things I knew nothing about, but learned through their passion.

I enjoyed my time at General Assembly; it is an experience I am grateful to have taken part in.



An evening gathering of YARs during General Assembly.

Young Adult Representatives:

Half a Century in the Making



Young Adult Observers gather at the 1977 General Assembly.

By Ian McKechnie, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont.

There they sit, assembled together at the gathering of commissioners for the sederunt—a dozen or so young people, talking quietly among themselves about the proceedings unfolding. Some of them bear expressions of wry amusement. Others scratch their heads, puzzled about all the seemingly arcane procedure playing out. And still others might look concerned—about the church and their place in it. (Most of the people in the room are, after all, more than twice their age.)

It comes time to vote on a recommendation, or perhaps on any number of amendments to amendments. But before that

happens, the Moderator casts a glance across the room and politely acknowledges the contingent of teens and twenty-somethings. They want to let the commissioners know what they think about the matter before them. A flurry of blue cards appears across the horizon of the Assembly hall. The young people have spoken via their much-heralded “advisory vote.”

And later that evening, perhaps making merry over pizza and pop, wings or watermelon, these same young people will be concocting a presentation for the final sederunt that will surely entertain while simultaneously speaking boldly and unashamedly to this, the highest court of their church.

These are the Young Adult Representatives—known colloquially

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13



Young Adult Observers Sabrina MacDonald and Laurie McKay make a presentation to the Rev. Dr. Wayne Smith, Moderator of the 1982 General Assembly.

as YARs—and they have been a fixture at every General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for more than half a century.

What were originally called Young Adult Observers first appeared at the 1969 General Assembly. This was a time of tremendous change in the church and in society at large; young people wanted to have a meaningful say in how storied institutions were run. Indeed, the 1967 General Assembly had decided “...that young adults should be drawn more fully into the life and work of the church, and that the courts of the church should be asked to appoint capable young adults to boards and committees to share in planning and decision making” (1969 A&P, 389).

To that end, ten YAOs were identified by the National Young Adult Steering Committee, in consultation with the Board of Christian Education, to represent various para-church organizations at General Assembly. Four represented a group called Action for Church Transformation (ACT); three were drawn from the Presbyterian Young People’s Society, and the remaining three hailed from Christian groups active on university campuses across the country. Of that inaugural group

of YAOs, two came from British Columbia, one from Alberta, four from Ontario, one from Quebec and two from Nova Scotia. Among the pressing topics of concern for these YAOs were Indigenous issues, the status of women, violence, and perhaps not surprisingly, the challenges of communication within the PCC.

Dawn Ross, representing University Hill Church in Vancouver, B.C., was invited to address the 1969 General Assembly during its thirteenth sederunt—and she did not mince words in expressing her and her fellow YAOs’ frustration with how the PCC conducted its affairs. “Some of us question whether or not the structure itself is worth getting involved with and worth changing,” Dawn lamented. “Some of us are considering leaving the institutional church, joining countless others who have done the same for similar reasons. The situation is serious.” Dawn did, however, acknowledge that the fact that she and the other YAOs were at Assembly at all was in itself “a major step forward” (1969 A&P, 100–101).

This tension between frustration with the present and hope for the future would prove to be a prevailing theme for YAOs and YARs at almost every General Assembly from then on.

YAOs at the 1970 General Assembly, for example, proposed a range of ambitious possibilities for how the PCC might revitalize youth ministry. “Young people cry out for action to solve the problems in today’s world,” exclaimed the YAOs, in their report in that year’s Acts & Proceedings. Similar words have been articulated at Assemblies through to the present day.

A significant change occurred in 1973, when the Board of Christian Education recommended to General Assembly that YAOs be nominated by one half of the pres-



Young Adult Representatives gather for a group photo following the 2012 General Assembly.

byteries on a rotational basis—a practice that enabled young people from across Canada to attend General Assembly. Indeed, long before the emergence of biennial national events such as Canada Youth, the YAO program functioned as a kind of *de facto* forum for Presbyterian youth to exchange ideas at a national level.

And what was it like to serve as a YAO during this period? “Sederunts were long, and often went overtime,” recalled the Rev. James T. Hurd, who served as a YAO at the 1981 General Assembly and who has been a familiar face at most Assemblies since. “We had less time to rest, relax, or work informally. There were a lot of meetings going on between sederunts.” James also recalled that it was more challenging to follow the business of Assembly—and unlike the experience of YARs in recent years, the thought of spontaneously getting up to speak to a recommendation or other matter at a microphone was out of the question. “Young Adult Observers were only permitted to speak if a commissioner first got up and made a motion, duly seconded, for them to do so.”

YAOs did, however, have their lighter moments. Mealtimes offered YAOs a chance to get to know one another, particularly during the free evening granted to commissioners and other participants: for example, those attending the 1982 General Assembly had supper at Toronto’s famous Organ Grinder restaurant, while those in 1985 travelled to Crieff Hills Retreat & Conference Centre for an evening of food and fellowship. The daily round of comings and goings at Assembly also enabled the YAOs to meet and mingle with a broad cross-section of the



YARs at the 2025 General Assembly give their advisory vote.

PCC and its leadership. “Perhaps you came across us in the elevator discussing the sederunt we had just attended, or perhaps you shared a lunch table with us,” noted the YAOs in their report to the 1990 General Assembly. “Did you notice anything? In a few short days we have compared ideas, views, and opinions discovering that we share common goals and ideals.”

A notable tradition emerging in the latter part of the 1980s was the YAO skit. Many of these have been extremely creative, sometimes involving parodies of popular songs. These skits have occasionally been used to voice the YARs’ concerns or displeasure with some aspect of Assembly—or the church in general. In 1994, Young Adult Representatives (as they were now called) sang, to the tune Camp Granada, a ditty that began:

*Moderator and those before us
We present to you the YAREE chorus
Don’t confuse us, please don’t bore us
But most of all we ask that none of you ignore us.*

Perhaps the most notable shift in the YAR story occurred

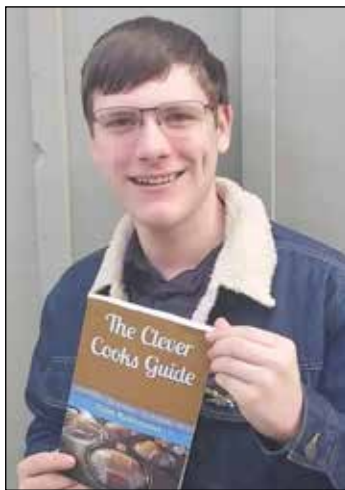
in 2009, when the General Assembly “...adopted a recommendation to grant an advisory vote to young adult representatives and student representatives that permits them to vote on matters selected by them or suggested to them by the Moderator or the Assembly itself” (2017 A&P, 238). While the advisory vote does not carry the official weight of a commissioner vote, it has become a powerful tool in giving YARs a voice at General Assembly—something that YAOs a generation before could only dream of.

With the Presbyterian Young People’s Society having largely faded into history, and with national youth conferences such as Canada Youth/uplift occurring biennially, the gathering of Young Adult Representatives at General Assembly has become the only major, annual occasion at which the youth of the PCC make their voice heard. And make it heard they do. “Despite our dwindling numbers, the PCC is still working with the Spirit to enact change,” remarked one YAR at the 2025 General Assembly. “We care deeply about the church and about what it could be doing to make a difference.”



Young Adult Representatives present a skit at the 2012 General Assembly.

Bayfield Youth Support Local Food Bank



Sam Robinson poses with a draft cover of his cookbook.

By Teresa Steel, Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont.

Sam Robinson, a member of Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., earned a Supporting Local Youth Program grant offered by the Huron County Economic Department. The grant is being used by Sam to create a cookbook for clients of the Bayfield Area Food Bank.

"I was volunteering at the local food bank and had an idea to make a cookbook for their clients with tips and tricks on how to use unusual items they find at the food bank, how to save money at the supermarket, create healthy meals, stretch their food budget and reduce food waste," said Sam. "In this book, you will find over 70 amazing recipes provided by the people of Huron County, ranging from homemade pancakes to how to make your own soup broth from scratch, and tons more."

The Supporting Local Youth Program grant is providing an opportunity to make this cookbook a reality! "The Clever Cook's Guide" launched on Saturday, May 3, at the Huron County Museum in Goderich, as a fundraiser for the Bayfield Area Food Bank. For every cookbook purchased at \$25, an additional cookbook will be donated to clients at food banks across Huron County. It is Sam's goal to provide 200 cookbooks to the area food banks.

Activities in Pictou County

By Mary Chesnutt, Clerk of Session, Middle River Presbyterian Church in Rocklin, N.S.

For the past several years, the congregations at Middle River Presbyterian Church in Rocklin and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Gairloch, Pictou County, N.S., have done a "Reverse Advent" event in November. Instead of receiving gifts, participants donate items for the Pictou East Food Bank. All items are delivered in the first week of December to allow for some extra provisions for the holidays. In 2024, we collected 523 pounds of food. This past December, we had an old-fashioned Christmas Concert with a request that anyone attending please bring something for our Christmas hat/scarf/mitten tree. We collected almost 100 items—97 to be exact! The smaller items were donated to Saltsprings Elementary School and the remaining items were donated to the Salvation Army in New Glasgow. The concert, which was held on Dec. 1, was very well attended. Everyone enjoyed hot cider and Christmas cookies, along with group singing

of the old carols. It was a wonderful way to start the Christmas season.

As well, over the past few years, the Rev. Bonnie Langille has guided a handbell group of 10 ladies known as the Cheery Chimes. The women come from the Hopewell Pastoral Charge (First Presbyterian Church in Hopewell, Middle River Presbyterian Church in Rocklin and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Gairloch). They practice on a



Collecting items for the food bank.

weekly basis and, with the help of our social secretary Vicky Graham, have routinely performed at various long-term care facilities in the area. Each June, a congregational concert is held at Middle River Presbyterian Church. This year, a time of fellowship was held with cake and ice cream for all who attended.



The Cheery Chimes. Front row (left to right): Grace Smith, Norma Tonks, the Rev. Bonnie Langille, Vicky Graham, Theresa Dooley. Back row: Faye Fraser, Lorna Shaw (hiding), Doreen Fraser, Judy Haslam, Anna Hirtle, Mary Chesnutt.

Songs of Ascents



By Aaron Law, The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal, Que.

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.*

The pilgrims of old sang these words on their journey up to Jerusalem. At various times throughout the year, people of faith in antiquity went up to the Temple to worship, and the songs they sang along the way were recorded in the Bible (Psalms 120 through 134), collectively known as the

Songs of Ascents. The pilgrims' ascent to the holy city was not only physical, it was also spiritual. Theologian Eugene H. Peterson calls it an act of "life lived upward toward God."

The young adults of The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal, Que., embarked on our own pilgrimage up Mount Royal the morning of April 19. We each read a song and reflected on the ways it spoke to our lives:

The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

God is watching over us, through the conflict and confusion in the world around us.

For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

I am not quite sure where I am in life, but I will keep living by gentleness and generosity in this house of God.

If it had not been the LORD, who was on our side,

God is at the centre of all prayers, of all communities; God is the bond that holds us together.

Happy is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways.

You shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

I am in mourning, but my hope is in the promise of God that joy is still to come.

Often have they attacked me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me.

I will lead a righteous life even when I'm treated with contempt. Christ has taught me so.

Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your faithful shout for joy.

I hope to have treated others well with kindness, bearing witness to Christ's love.

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

God has brought us together, there is no better worship of God than to love one another.

We are all pilgrims who spend our lives going someplace, going to God, God who has shown us the way, the truth and the life in



The participants of the journey up Mount Royal on April 19: Tolu, Rose, Sri, Sam, Ross, Aaron, Tristan, Anna, Yiming, Emma, Susan.

Jesus Christ. On that mountain we prayed, we sang, we listened, and we looked to the LORD our God, who has covered us with God's mercy.

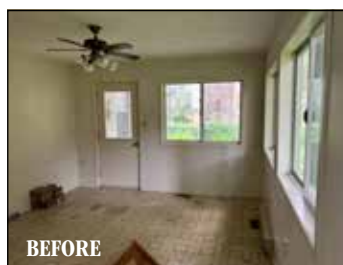
*O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
leaning on the everlasting arms.*



New Beginnings in Preserving a Piece of Presbyterian History



Cutting the ribbon are: Michael Ho, MP Richmond Hill South; Susan Falla-Johnson, Clerk of Session; the Rev. Robert Hayashi; Mayor David West; Daisy Wai, MPP; David Mock, Congregational Trustee.



"Before" and "after" photos of the manse.

Submitted by Susan Falla-Johnson, Clerk of Session, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont.

In an era where Presbyterian churches are closing and congregations are selling church property to stay financially viable, the congregation at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., decided to take a different path and preserve a piece of Presbyterian history.

Over the past year, the Kirk Session and congregation prayerfully discerned the need to preserve pieces of the church's history within the community. Restorations began on the manse, built in 1877, and on the cemetery vault, erected in 1863 and previously restored in 1995. The congregation has a history of preserving

pieces of its past—including when its original manse, built in the mid-1840's, was donated to The Village at Black Creek (formerly Black Creek Pioneer Village) in Toronto, where it remains preserved to this day. But these have not been easy decisions to make.

As the Rev. Dr. Stuart MacDonald stated, "These are challenging times. We must make difficult decisions about property and buildings, some of which have significant heritage value. In all decisions, I believe it is important that we approach the issues prayerfully, think clearly, act deliberately—but always remain focused on our goal to be Christ's people in this present time. This will lead different communities to make different decisions. Not a problem. We will need to con-

solidate. That will mean saying goodbye to some buildings that we love. What I hope and pray is that our decisions will be the determination to provide for the next decades and the next generations the resources (financial and physical) that will allow them to fulfill our mission. To me, that means worship, supporting each other as we live as disciples, and inviting others to join us as followers of the risen Christ."

While the congregation was supportive of the efforts to preserve pieces of our history, they were especially supportive of the effort to preserve the manse through their offerings, but we knew we could not carry the cost alone. Therefore, our Congregational Trustees and Cemetery Board went to work to understand where we could best partner to secure the funds necessary with reasonable terms to move forward with these projects. After an exhaustive search of banks, grants and other lenders, it was determined that our best route was to apply for funds through The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Lending Fund, the Presbyterian Church Building Corporation's Loan Program, and the Presbytery of Oak Ridges' Growth Fund. The Congregational Trustees worked closely with Betty Kupeian, the chief operating officer at the Presbyterian Church Building Corporation (PCBC), to successfully secure funding for the manse renovation. We are very appreciative of Betty's guid-

ance and time, as she steered us in the right direction.

Working with Betty and her team helped us complete the due diligence to ensure we could take on these capital projects. Our newly renovated manse not only adds tremendous value to our church but also adds lasting economic value to the PCC.

The following is a quote from Betty Kupeian: "It was a pleasure working with such an organized team at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church ably led by Congregational Trustee David Mock. PCBC worked with a budget submitted by RHPC to enable the loan payments. Our first recommendation was for a \$150,000 Lending Fund Loan, which is interest-free for 12 years, the remainder being financed by the PCBC loan guarantee to the Royal Bank of Canada."

We are thankful for all the guidance given to us by Betty Kupeian and others and hope that the denomination will continue to think of creative funding initiatives to assist congregations in preserving a piece of Presbyterian history in their communities.

With regard to the cemetery vault, the Cemetery Board and Congregational Trustees worked to secure grants from several local organizations: City of Richmond Hill Heritage Grant, German Folklore Society, Richmond Hill Legion, Richmond Hill Historical Society, and members of our con-

gregation who were aligned with our vision to preserve it.

While funding is a critical piece of the puzzle, so too is finding the right building contractors to work with, who have the same vision and desire to preserve a piece of history. We came to appreciate that selecting the right contractor ensured good communication with our building committee and the success of the project.

We are pleased to announce that work is completed on both the manse and the cemetery vault, and we are forever grateful to the people and organizations that have guided us, helped fund these projects and journeyed with us along the way, especially all those within the congregation. With the manse now rented on a two-year lease to a professional educator, we look forward to the manse providing a source of income that will go to sustaining Christ's ministry and mission in Richmond Hill for generations to come.

While the RHPC Session and congregation believe it is important to preserve our history, we believe even more strongly that it is vital to grow the ministry and mission of our Lord Jesus Christ in Richmond Hill and the surrounding area. We thank God for God's provision of people, property and wisdom, and we look to the future with hope in our hearts and mission on our minds.



The manse rededication and open house on May 24.



A praise dance.

*By the Rev. Reine Boghos,
St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church
in Ottawa, Ont.*

When people think of church, they may envision solemn hymns, quiet prayers and reflective sermons. While reverence is indeed part of worship, so is joy, laughter and the warmth of community. At St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., we believe that being part of God's family is not only meaningful, but also joyful.

Scripture is rich with examples of celebration. The people of Israel gathered for festivals filled with music, dancing and feasting. The psalmist proclaims, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1 NIV). Jesus himself joined wedding feasts, shared meals with friends, and taught using stories full of wit and creativity. In John 10:10b, he promises, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." That full life includes joy, laughter and community—which we experience vibrantly at St. Timothy's.

As a multicultural congregation, we delight in the richness of our diversity. During the Christmas season, families gather for our gingerbread house and pizza event, sharing laughter and creativity. In July, we hold a beloved outdoor worship service beneath our spreading maple tree, followed by a joyful picnic filled with music, fellowship and good food.

Our monthly Café Connections and Agape gatherings offer warm hospitality, where coffee and tea spark meaningful conversations and genuine friendships. Festive moments during Christmas, Valentine's Day and Easter fill our church with energy and celebration.

Every Sunday, our hall buzzes with families sharing not only worship but life together—celebrating baptisms, birthdays and weddings, or walking together through life's more difficult moments.

In February, we mark Black History Month with a special service of music, reflection and thanksgiving, planned and led by the African Chorus at St. Timothy's. This dedicated group brings their joyful, uplifting music to this annual celebration, as well as blessing us with their vibrant songs every month. The joy of worship continues after the service with a feast of international cuisine from Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East, celebrating the rich gifts of culture and heritage within our community.

Our Sunday School is growing



The African Chorus at St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont.

and lively, and the happy noise of children brings energy and life to our sanctuary.

Throughout the year, barbecue gatherings, youth events and church celebrations continue to draw us together in Christ's name.

We are especially thankful for the new members God has brought into our church family. Over the past six years (including the challenging pandemic years), 60 individuals have joined our church through baptism or profession of faith. What a blessing!

Our joy extends beyond events—it lives in our ministry. Volunteers, committee members and leaders offer their gifts with passion and love. We rejoice in answered prayers and in mission work that allows us to share Christ's love far beyond our walls.

One of the highlights of this year was our multicultural celebration—a vivid tapestry of who we are. As one church family,

we came together to honour the richness of our diverse community through music, dance and a colourful fashion show. Cultures from Scotland, Syria, Lebanon, Africa, Indonesia and Nepal were proudly and beautifully represented, each bringing its own story, colour and spirit to life. The praise dance by two of our Sunday School girls was a moving expression of faith and joy that touched many hearts. We were also blessed to enjoy a wonderful array of international dishes, lovingly prepared and shared. The laughter, connection and warm fellowship reminded us once again of the strength and beauty found in our unity.

At St. Timothy's, we believe church should be a place where children laugh, families grow and friendships flourish. Whether during worship, over coffee, at youth events, or in the quiet moments of prayer, our community reflects the heart of God. Worship,

Laughter and Love: The Heart of St. Timothy's.

So come to church with a smile. Bring your heart, your hopes, your burdens and your joy. Because in God's house, we are not only renewed and restored—we are delighted. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10b).



Preparing a pizza meal for families.



Welcoming new members.



The Children's Choir.



Children's stuffies visiting the church.



A gingerbread house event.

Moderator Visits Presbytery of Newfoundland



The Rev. David Sturtevant (right), Moderator of the Presbytery of Newfoundland, with Pat and Tim on Signal Hill.



Members of all three churches attended the Narratives of Hope workshop.

*By Lynne Allan, Clerk of the
Presbytery of Newfoundland*

Less than two months before the end of her term as Moderator of the 2024 General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls and her husband, Tim, travelled coast to coast from their home in British Columbia to visit the Presbytery of Newfoundland. It was the first time in many years that a Moderator from outside Newfoundland and Labrador visited the province.

With only two days to fit everything in, Pat's stay was limited to St. John's, where two of the presbytery's three churches—St. Andrew's and St. David's—are located. The third church—St. Matthew's—is in Grand Falls-Windsor, 430 km away.

While in the province's capital, Pat had the opportunity to learn about the history and mission work of St. Andrew's and St. Matthew's through presentations made by church members. With St. David's celebrating the 250th anniversary of its congregation, an in-depth history was presented at The Rooms, the province's largest public cultural space. A presentation titled "the Dissenter's Path" took place and Pat was able to examine a model of an early meeting house of the Congregational Church of St. John's during a reception afterwards.

A visit to Bridges to Hope, a



Pat and Tim at Bridges to Hope food bank.

food bank supported by both St. Andrew's and St. David's, was another highlight. Both Pat and Tim are involved with food banks in British Columbia and enjoyed the chance to discuss and exchange ideas with staff and volunteers.

Pat's visit also gave her the opportunity to present a Narratives of Hope and Possibility workshop, which was attended by members of the three churches and proved to be an enjoyable learning experience.

There wasn't much time for sightseeing, but Pat and Tim did get to Signal Hill, a national historic site famous for its role in Canada's military and communications history. There they saw Cabot Tower and met Sable Chief, a Newfoundland dog named after the one that served as mascot of the 2nd Battalion Royal Newfoundland Regiment during the First World War. Pat also visited Quidi Vidi, a neighbourhood of St. John's that remains an active fishing village. It snowed, of course. It was April in Newfoundland.

Before Pat and Tim's departure, presbytery members thought it imperative they experience a seafood supper, and they tried cod tongues for the first time. As a parting gift, a Labradorite pendant was pre-

sented to Pat in appreciation of her visit, as was a bar of Newfoundland-made chocolate. The wrapper featured the Newfoundland saying, "God Love Your Cotton Socks," which means thank you or bless your heart.



Pat and Tim in front of Cabot Tower.

Over 46 Years of Service in Ottawa

*By Carol Ann Joiner,
Westminster Presbyterian Church
in Ottawa, Ont.*

Ian Firth has been actively involved in the life of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., for over 46 years, and he still is! The church Session officially acknowledged his retirement from the Finance & Maintenance Team (1978–2024) this past March, although he remains active working the camera for our online services every Sunday and helps with the Finance team periodically. He now has more time to enjoy riding his motorcycle, travelling and spend-

ing time with his family.

Ian's involvement with Westminster started when a work friend, who also immigrated from England, invited Ian to come to church with him. That was in 1978. Ian, his wife, Celia, and their two boys soon became involved in church activities. Ian started out as a general member of the Finance & Maintenance team, then became our church rental/accommodations coordinator and gradually took on more roles within the Finance & Maintenance Team, including vice-chair and then chairperson (back when they had 24 members). In 1997,

he became the church treasurer and continued in that role for 15 years until 2012. When he resigned from that position, he did not step off the team but rather he took on two smaller roles: reports manager and payroll manager. The rest of the treasurer's roles needed to be divided into six parts and six people! Of course, Ian stayed active (and was a great resource for the team) from 2013 to 2019, and in 2020 he took on yet another role—that of secretary. In December 2024, he officially stepped down, while remaining active within the church.

Celia has been by Ian's side all

this time, and has been active in her own way, including being on our Prayer Chain and taking part in church bazaars and other fundraising events.

We give thanks to Ian for his 46-plus years of service, commitment and dedication to Westminster. He took on jobs many of us would have had a hard time doing or wouldn't want to do, including presenting and balancing budgets, paying church bills, keeping track of financial matters, and so much more! We are grateful for all that Ian has done and continues to do. May God continue to bless Ian and his family!



Ian Firth retired from his position at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Ottawa after more than 46 years of service.

Our Lenten Desire to Connect and Shine



*By the Rev. Jacqueline Cleland,
Oakridge Christian Ministry,
part of the Vancouver Chinese
Presbyterian Church*

As Lent began, the Oakridge Christian Ministry in Vancouver, B.C., embarked on a journey to the cross and our neighbourhood. Our pilgrimage, like many, was driven by the question of what will drive us into a closer relationship with God in this season. We reflected on what we feel is our connection point with God. We believe our mission from God is to be active members of the Oakridge Community. So, we made our Lenten journey steps to be those who walked beside our neighbours in new ways and contexts.

As part of our journey, we walked beside different preachers as they were invited in to share their own unique takes on the Easter Story. The congregation and visitors of Oakridge Christian Ministry were blessed with inspiring messages from a diverse group of speakers. The Rev. Jeff Greenman, the Rev. Abraham Lau, Chaplain Sumarme Goble, the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, the Rev. Ross Lockhart, the Rev. Dennis Howard, and Jacqueline Cleland—each brought

their unique perspective to the season of reflection. One highlight was learning of the Moderator's trip to Malawi and seeing how all communities can connect to God in diverse and beautiful ways.

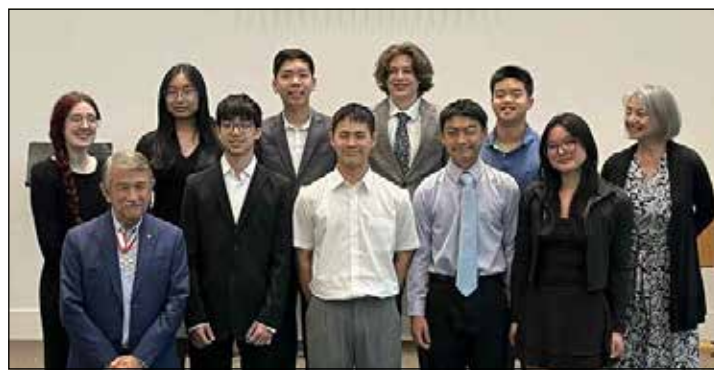
One way people can connect to God is through music. On April 5, the church was filled with the beautiful sounds of classical piano and the inspiring testimony of missionary pianist Julie Lowe during her Testimony of Hope concert. Attendees were deeply moved by how she wove musical masterpieces with her personal journey of faith.

Our outreach was not restricted to our four walls. Inspired by the desire to connect with our community, the congregation had been invited to embark on "40 Acts of Outreach" during Lent. We were blessed by a group who delivered pamphlets to our neighbours to invite them to join us. This initiative saw church members stepping outside their comfort zones to engage with their neighbours meaningfully. Some of the ways we engaged was through giving a helping hand with a task, praying, participating in community events, and even donating to programs in the area that helped our neighbours with challenges.

In a powerful act of solidar-

ity, congregation members participated in "Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me" by writing down their personal struggles and placing them on a communal tree. This symbolized the willingness to share burdens and lean on the support of the community in following Jesus. This willingness to share burdens, to reflect and discuss, was highlighted in our Lenten Study on Practicing Jesus' Seven Last Words, a Presbyterian Church in Canada weekly study.

As the season of Lent has passed, the desire to connect—nurtured by the Oakridge Christian Ministry—continues to shine, leaving a lasting impact on the congregation and the wider community. Their intentional efforts are a powerful reminder of the importance of connection in our faith journeys.



Celebrating the Achievements of Youth

*By the Rev. Jacqueline Cleland,
Oakridge Christian Ministry,
part of the Vancouver Chinese
Presbyterian Church*

Oakridge Christian Ministry in Vancouver, B.C., which is part of the Vancouver Presbyterian Church, was proud to host a Duke of Edinburgh Awards Ceremony for Bronze and Silver recipients on June 14 in Vancouver. It was a touching event honouring the remarkable achievements of youth aged 14–24. This is an international award for young people that challenges, empowers and recognizes youth, encouraging them to grow in: Voluntary Service, Skill Development, Physical Recreation, Adventurous Journey and the Gold Project. Participants design an award program, set goals and work towards them, learn skills, and make a positive impact on the lives of others. Through these experiences, participants build confidence, resilience and leadership skills that truly last a lifetime.

This year, we were honoured to welcome Dr. Victor Ling as our

guest presenter for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Dr. Ling is a distinguished Officer of the Order of Canada for his work in cancer research. Dr. Ling's lifelong dedication to making a difference for Christ serves as a powerful example for the young award recipients. He reminded us that through hard work, resilience and a commitment to serving others, we too can have a lasting and meaningful impact on the world. Our personal best is what we should focus on.

We also heard from two different speakers: Heidi, a leader, and silver award recipient Makayla, who challenged us to go out and "touch some grass"—an image used to inspire us to get in touch with what brings joy and growth.

As author C.S. Lewis reminds us, children are not a distraction from more important work, they are the most important work. This quote truly resonates with the spirit of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, emphasizing the lasting positive impact that investing in our youth can have on Christ's community.

Churches Unite for Worship



The Rev. Susan Kerr cooling off after the Wet Sponge Toss.

*By Ron Dekker, Burlington East
Presbyterian Church in Burlington,
Ont.*

In a heartwarming display of unity and community spirit, congregants from all four Presbyterian churches in Burlington, Ont.—Brant Hills, Burlington East, Knox and St. Paul's—gathered in June for a day of worship, fellowship and fun at the scenic Crieff Hills Retreat & Conference Centre in Puslinch, Ont.

The day began with a lively "Get



The Rev. Mike Aldred cheering on game participants.

to Know Each Other" Bingo game, setting a joyful tone as members from each congregation mingled and made new connections. The morning worship service followed in the conference centre, led by the Rev. Mike Aldred, with uplifting music provided by the Rev. Susan Kerr.

Lunch was served in Maclean Hall, a charming one-room schoolhouse on the property. The kitchen staff prepared a hearty, wholesome buffet that was enjoyed around rustic farmhouse tables.

The afternoon brought out the playful side of attendees, with games for all ages. A standout moment was the "Wet Sponge Toss" fundraiser, where participants paid a dollar per sponge to toss at the ministers. The Rev. Susan Kerr gamely took the splashes, helping raise funds for Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D).

The event provided an opportunity for the four churches to exchange ideas and discuss each other's upcoming summer

events. The day was a beautiful reminder of the strength and joy found in community, faith and shared purpose. A good time was had by all.



Buffet lunch served at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre for four Burlington churches.



This photo is of Lorelle and Ian Marchoch from June. Ian has retired after 40 years as caretaker of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man.



A quilt show run by Bea's Quilting Bees was held in the sanctuary of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta.



Several fun activities recently took place at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Halifax, N.S., including a birthday celebration for their minister, the Rev. Michael Koslowski. Pictured here are members preparing for pancake breakfast at Easter, and an auction that raised funds for Camp Geddie.



The June meeting for the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry, which was held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lancaster, Ont., included a potluck lunch and cake to celebrate the PCC's 150th anniversary. The group sang "Happy Birthday" and enjoyed food and fellowship.



During worship on Sunday, June 22, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Caintown, Ont., celebrated a "two-for-one": ordination of a new elder and welcoming new members! Dave McIntyre was ordained as an elder, following the congregational meeting where he was chosen to be ordained. The Rev. Marianne Emig Carr, together with the rest of the Session, participated in the service of ordination. But St. Paul's wasn't done yet—they welcomed JoAnne Sytsma and Melanie Wright as members by transfer of membership and profession of faith. It was a wonderful day in the life of the congregation, and St. Paul's is grateful to God for Dave, JoAnne and Melanie for their faithfulness. Pictured above left are Angie Cowan (Clerk of Session), the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr, Dave McIntyre (newly ordained elder), Lisette McIntyre, Catherine Blatch and Barb Morrison. John Cowan (elder) was not available that day.



On Saturday, May 31, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., hosted a community art show and sale.



The Speaker Series at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., which is sponsored by Goderich Toyota, is now underway for 2025. On Wednesday, May 14, the congregation welcomed representatives from the Huron County Historical Society (HCHS). Local historian and archivist Ralph Laviolette, who is also the treasurer of the HCHS, along with president David Armstrong were special guests. Those in attendance learned much about the creation of the historical societies and the establishment of archives throughout the county. The presentation included maps that have been collected and stored at Huron County Museum, alongside an excellent collection of archives and artifacts. Rhea Seeger, editor of the HCHS newsletter, spoke about the newsletter's creation, which started in 1965. Pictured here are church elder Judith Roy (second from left) with members of the Huron County Historical Society David Armstrong, Rhea Seeger and Ralph Laviolette.

The congregation at First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., was thrilled to welcome the Rev. Ian Johnston as Minister-in-Association during worship on Sunday, June 22. Under The Presbyterian Church in Canada polity, all ministers, retired and active, are members of the presbytery within which bounds they reside. But retired ministers and those without a pastoral charge may "associate" themselves with a PCC congregation and thus have a congregational home and enjoy the rights and privileges of being a member of that congregation. The Rev. Ian's wife, June, had already become a member of First Church, and Ian now joins her. They are both pictured here with the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr. Welcome to June and the Rev. Ian Johnston!



On April 27, Central Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., celebrated the exceptional ministry of the Rev. Dr. Nicholas Athanasiadis ("Dr. Nick") as he retired after almost 34 years of ministering to various congregations throughout Ontario, Quebec and Alberta. Arriving at Central during a time of great instability, for the last three years Dr. Nick's caring and sensitive leadership helped prepare the congregation to call its next minister. A special Sunday service was held that included a tribute from the children and music especially selected and sung by the choir. The service was followed by a congregational luncheon. Dr. Nick is pictured here at the reception with his family.



Five congregations, who call themselves the Central Niagara Presbyterians, worked collaboratively to hold a Spring Blessings Tea in May for the Presbytery of Niagara. The group came together in worship, using the 10 beautiful stained-glass windows in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Welland as the theological inspiration. The service was followed by fellowship to celebrate 150 years of the PCC. Pictured here is one example of the special music provided with the inter-congregational choir.



The congregation at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Kemptville, Ont., dedicated funds from its spring mission project to the ministry of Leeds & Grenville Interval House, which supports women and children as they seek refuge from abuse to find safety, dignity and hope. This mission project was generously supported by the congregation through their donations. Melissa Leveck, Executive Director of Leeds & Grenville Interval House, received a cheque for \$3,750 from the Rev. Samer Kandalafi and the Mission Committee during worship on May 25. This is more than a donation—it is a declaration that every person deserves to live free from fear, that healing is holy work, that justice is love in action. Pictured (left to right) are Jim Armour, David Carmichael, Melissa Leveck, the Rev. Samer Kandalafi, Ruth Bond and Nancy Messenger.



On April 26, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Kemptville, Ont., led by the St. Paul's Youth Group, once again hosted its annual Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser with a silent auction. Always a great hit, this year did not disappoint. In addition to two separate dining hours in the accessible church hall, 26 delicious dinners were also picked up at the door for home dining comfort. Wonderful aromas filled the air as light, love and laughter filled the room. What a great community outreach for the church! For those who missed it—the congregation hopes to see you next year for a delicious meal and the pleasure of having the wonderful young people serve you!



Congratulations to Patricia St. James Smith who received a Master of Divinity degree from St. Andrew's Hall/Vancouver School of Theology. On Sunday, May 18, the congregation at Barney's River—Marshy Hope Presbyterian Church in Barney's River, N.S., held a luncheon to acknowledge and celebrate Patricia's achievement. The congregation thanks Patricia for her worship and spiritual guidance as a lay preacher for the last seven years.



On Sunday, April 6, Diane McLean, Joan McKay and Nellie McKay were ordained as elders of Knox Presbyterian Church in Moose Creek, Ont. In the 187-year history of the congregation, this is the first time women have been ordained to the position. It was truly a morning of celebration as family and friends gathered to witness this historic moment. Following the communion service, a time of fellowship was enjoyed by the congregation. Pictured here (left to right) are Interim Moderator the Rev. Ian MacMillan, Nellie McKay, Joan McKay, Diane McLean and Clerk of Session Stuart McKay.



On June 11, participants of the Helping Hands women's group held a wind-up lunch at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man., and wore fascinators in memory of dearly loved Carole, who passed away a year ago.



Mother's Day at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man.



It has been a great few weeks at Morningside – High Park Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.! The congregation was overjoyed to welcome 13 new members to the inclusive faith family. On June 29, the congregation was blessed to baptize four young people. Welcome to God's family Josh Francisco, Dylan, Emmett and Aiden Lainsbury. Also pictured are Lindsay and Anna Matheson who confirmed their faith. They're shown above right with the Rev. Cherie Inksetter.



In June, Ministry Forum, the Centre for Lifelong Learning at Knox College in Toronto, Ont., hosted the second annual Creative Ways event in Hamilton. Local voices inspired attendees with practical, prophetic examples of ways to boost their communities, often working with one another to accomplish a bigger vision. Pictured above (top to bottom) are: guest speakers Teresa Howe, Community Engagement Manager, Indwell; the Rev. Dr. Mark Lewis, Interim Moderator, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton; Randell Neudorf, artist and storyteller, Greater Ontario House of Prayer; Adrian Jacobs, Senior Leader for Indigenous Justice Reconciliation; and the Rev. John Borthwick, Director of Ministry Forum.



Knox Presbyterian Church in Magnetawan, Ont., celebrated its 147th anniversary in June with a special service followed by a BBQ lunch. The Rev. Steven Smith cooked hamburgers for members after leading the Sunday service.



What a difference a year makes! It was an honour and a privilege for the congregation at Morningside – High Park Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., and especially for creators Kirk and Claire Dunn, as their Pride Pennant Project, which was hung at MHP last June, now graces the High Commission of Canada's "Canada House" in Trafalgar Square in London, England, in honour of Pride. God's love includes everyone!

This is Loch Broom log church in Pictou County, N.S., a replica built in 1973 of the first church built in 1787 by Scottish immigrants upon their arrival. The land was donated by the McCabe family. St. George's Presbyterian Church – River John and St. David's Presbyterian Church held a joint service there on June 22, with the Rev. Enjei Achah preaching. Myrna Phillips served as organist, Harley White played mandolin and student Aaron (who has McCabe roots) oversaw the activities.



An ecumenical church service was held on Sunday, July 6, at the Magnetawan, Ont., pavilion. Five churches from the area were represented: St. George's Anglican Church with the Rev. Michael Fleming; Trinity United Church with the Rev. Peter Wyatt; St. Paul's Lutheran Church with Christine Lauffer; Knox Presbyterian Church with the Rev. Steven Smith; Burk's Falls Church of the Holy Spirit, represented by Deacon Brad Lewis. Congregation members and visitors joined together for this special service.



On May 29, the staff at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre in Puslinch, Ont., was joined by the Rev. Ernie Naylor (convener of the board) to give thanks for the fence on a new 10-acre rotational grazing area. The fence was made possible with proceeds from the sale of the Dorchester Presbyterian Church building. The fields will become home to small herds of sheep, pigs and cows, and will help store carbon, reduce greenhouse gases and rehabilitate the soil. Sheep added their voices to the liturgy(!), and cake was (of course) shared afterwards. It was a joyful event!



Living Faith Community Presbyterian Church in Baxter, Ont., ran a Cereal Box Challenge for six weeks, where the congregation was asked to donate cereal for the local food banks. The congregation was able to collect 110 boxes of cereal and, to make things fun, they set the boxes up during Family Time and created a "domino" path. The children did a countdown, and the first box was pushed over! This was an amazing effort to support families experiencing food shortages. PHOTO CREDIT: CAROLYN MORRIS



On Saturday, June 29, Presbyterians from across Ontario marched in the Toronto Pride Parade. PHOTOS BY ARMOUR HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.



July 7–11, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., hosted Compassion Camp. Every day, campers explored a new way to put compassion into action in their lives. Highlights of the week included bubble experiments, making instruments, water day, parachute games and banana pops, not to mention all the new friendships and faith connections that were made.





On Sunday, June 15, the Session and congregation of Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., were pleased to celebrate with the Rev. Clive and Donna Simpson and their daughter Deborah their 60th wedding anniversary. What a wonderful milestone to be able to share! They are pictured here on their wedding day (held at Willowdale Presbyterian Church) on June 12, 1965.



On Sunday, May 18, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church's former Director of Music Deon Flash held a thank-you concert in the sanctuary in appreciation of the congregation's support after his mother passed away. All enjoyed the wonderful ministry of music by Deon, Soloist Britney Service and her accompanist husband, Jordan Service. Pictured are Jordan Service, Britney Service, Deon Flash and the Rev. Robert Hayashi.



On Sunday, May 18, the congregation at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., celebrated several congregational achievements. The Rev. Maryka Potgieter (wife of Knox College Principal the Rev. Dr. Ernest Van Eck) received her Master of Psychospiritual Care on her way to becoming a licensed psychotherapist. Elder Jane Whetham was presented with the Knox College Brydon Prize for top marks (Church History, Reformation). And Natasha Priyanka was recognized for receiving permanent residency in Canada. Pictured here are (left to right) the Rev. Dr. Ernest Van Eck (who accepted the award on Maryka's behalf as she was unable to attend), Jane Whetham, the Rev. Robert Hayashi, Natasha Priyanka and Susan Falla-Johnson.



On Sunday, June 15, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont., marked the 150th anniversary of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and 190 years of Presbyterianism in Lindsay. The guest preacher was the Rev. David Whitecross, who served as assistant minister at St. Andrew's from 1994 through 2001. Also joining the festivities was Nelia Steward, whose great-uncle, the Rev. Dr. J.W. MacMillan, served as minister at St. Andrew's from 1895 through 1903. They are pictured here with Ian McKechnie, an elder at St. Andrew's, who compiled and edited *Recollections + Reflections: 150 Years of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*, a project of the PCC's Committee on History.



The congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., once again set-up on the lawn in front of the church to host their "BBQ, Baking and Book Sale" fundraiser on Saturday, July 5. The positive energy coming from meeting and serving so many wonderful people contributed to the event's success. Funds raised will go towards maintenance efforts underway at the church. "It is our desire to do what we can in the upkeep and maintenance of our church, which is a part of the Bayfield Heritage Conservation District Plan," said Teresa Steel, representing Knox Church. "This involves a multifaceted approach that encompasses both spiritual care and physical upkeep of the building and property, allowing everyone to enjoy their experience at our little church with a great big heart." PHOTO CREDITS: MELODY FALCONER-POUNDER



On May 4, the Rev. Deb Stanbury was inducted into Trinity Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont. Members of Toronto's Armour Heights Presbyterian Church family travelled to Hamilton to support and bless her.



In May and June, through a special sermon series, members and friends of Erindale Presbyterian Church in Mississauga, Ont., learned about our responsibility in supporting nature and the environment. This learning went “experiential” with a bird walk led by Central Ontario renowned birder, Luc Fazio. Sixteen participants, ages 5 to over 80, walked the Riverwood Conservancy and saw countless types of trees, plants and wildflowers. However, the thrill of the walk was the 50 different bird species that were seen and heard, all in the heart of Mississauga! The group saw indigo buntings, rose-breasted grosbeaks, Northern flickers, great crested flycatchers, a female red-winged blackbird (sitting on her nest), and a brood of little Mallard ducks, to name a few. The wonder of a child seeing nature, and then that same child teaching an elder, created special moments.



Last spring, staff at Crieff Hills Retreat & Conference Centre in Puslinch, Ont., planted a beautiful array of native fruit trees all over the property. With the help of a grant from TD Friends of the Environment, as well as support from Green Legacy Wellington, staff and volunteers added tree varieties like chokeberry and hackberry to the landscape, and they will eventually produce a harvest for the retreat’s kitchen. Members of the board of directors for the MacLean Estate, which oversees Crieff Hills, were on hand one Saturday in May to help out and participate in the celebrations.



On Saturday, May 3, ARISE Ministry, which is a mission of the Presbytery of East Toronto and supported by the PCC, hosted a successful fundraising dinner and gala at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church. The event featured guest speaker Glenn Healy, former goaltender with the Toronto Maple Leafs, who is now the executive director/president of the NHL Alumni Association. ARISE helps those involved in the sex trade to reclaim their lives through hope, love and justice. Learn more about ARISE at ariseministry.ca.



On June 22, the congregation at St. George’s Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., recognised Graham Esler’s 60 years (and still counting!) as a church elder. He has also been an active member of Session. Some of his many notable accomplishments include being part of the four-person committee that was instrumental in the concept, design and oversight of the construction of our present church building and he continues to serve as one of the Trustees. He is also the Archivist for St. George’s. He was thanked for his many years of service.

**Thank you for supporting
Presbyterians Sharing!**



A thank-you video and other resources are available at presbyterian.ca/sharing

Welcoming a New Minister in Medicine Hat

By Pearl Fauser, St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta.

On May 3, the Rev. Heather Carlson was inducted as minister of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Medicine Hat, Alta.

Members of Calgary-MacLeod Presbytery, Interim Moderator the Rev. Peter Baek, members of the Rev. Heather's family, local ministers, and the friends and family of St. John's met in celebration and joy for a luncheon, prepared and served by the Congregational Life and Mission Committee and Women of the Church, and for the induction service that followed.

Eric Kean piped the procession of presbyters into the service and

induction, led by the Rev. Peter Baek, Clerk of Presbytery Christian Persaud, Moderator Heather Bryant, the Rev. Bob Cruickshank and Joyce Engel. The Rev. Christopher Joiner delivered the sermon, and the choir provided an anthem especially chosen for the induction. In welcome, the Search Committee presented a wall clock to the Rev. Heather and Women of the Church presented a quilt, the top of which had been pieced by Pearl Fauser, borders and finishing by June Freeman, with quilting done by Colleen at Thimble & Threads. Appreciation was expressed to the Interim Moderator for his gentle and caring leadership and guidance during the vacancy.



At the welcome luncheon. Seated (left to right) are: the Rev. Nancy Cocks, the Rev. Heather Carlson, Clerk of Presbytery Christian Persaud, Moderator of Presbytery Heather Bryant, the Rev. Peter Baek and, standing, Clerk of Session Joyce Engel.



Joyce Engel expresses appreciation for Interim Moderator the Rev. Peter Baek.



Presentation of the quilt from Women of the Church. Pictured (left to right): Phyllis Pudwell, June Freeman and the Rev. Heather, with the Rev. Bob Cruickshank at back.



Piper Eric Kean.

Bible Course Deepens Faith Connections

By the Rev. John Borthwick, Centre for Lifelong Learning at Knox College in Toronto, Ont.

Earlier this year, the Rev. John Borthwick, curator of ministryforum.ca and director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning at Knox College in Toronto, Ont., hosted an online gathering that brought together participants from across Canada and Brazil. Using the Canadian Bible Society's Bible Course (biblesociety.ca/the-biblecourse), this diverse cohort embarked on a journey through scripture to deepen their understanding and strengthen their faith connections.

The Bible Course is an eight-session program designed to help participants grow in their understanding of the Bible, suitable for both newcomers and those well-versed in scripture. Using a unique storyline approach—through video teaching, written guides, diagrams and readings—it shows how key events, books and characters fit together. The course is flexible and can be used in various settings, including homes, workplaces, churches or online meetings.

Toyin Agbaje explained, "I

registered for the Bible Course because I wanted to deepen my knowledge of the Bible." She particularly appreciated the comprehensive nature and quality of the presentation by Dr. Andrew Ollerton, noting that "the open format was wonderful, because everyone had a chance to give an opinion and an explanation."

Pamela Richardson praised the course as "outstanding," highlighting how "eight well-structured online sessions" with "a skilled and knowledgeable facilitator guided our group of 15 participants through meaningful discussions and insights that covered the entire history of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation!"

Eugênio Anunciação from Brazil found the materials "vibrant and practical," particularly valuing how "the authors use many metaphors to help students connect the Bible's different cultural world views to their own reality." The cross-cultural aspect created unexpected enrichment: "It was a unique opportunity to meet brothers and sisters from Canada who also love the Word of God."

Candy Grant offered perspective on how the Bible Course addresses contemporary ministry

challenges, noting it is "an excellent example of how to lighten the load for our ministers by sharing our programs." The flexibility of recorded online delivery allowed participants to engage in the

comfort of their own home or at a time that is convenient.

This experience demonstrates how digital platforms can create meaningful connections across borders, bringing together diverse

voices in the shared pursuit of biblical understanding and spiritual growth.

For future offerings, subscribe to receive email notification at ministryforum.ca.



NOMINATIONS OPEN

for the degree of Doctor of Divinity (*honoris causa*)
as awarded by the Knox College Board of Governors



To honour people exemplifying critical aspects of Knox College's mission, including through:

- Creative leadership at any level of church life
- Scholarly contribution to the church or academic community
- Effective and faithful pastoral leadership
- Creative leadership in mission
- Outstanding faith-based contribution to public life

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



KNOX COLLEGE
www.knox.utoronto.ca



The congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bracebridge.

150 Years in Bracebridge



One of the eldest members of the congregation, Catherine Elliott, joins one of the youngest, Felix Goodchild, along with the Rev. Dr. Heather Malnick, to cut the celebratory cake.

*By the Rev. Dr. Heather Malnick,
Knox Presbyterian Church in
Bracebridge, Ont.*

Knox Presbyterian Church in Bracebridge, Ont., is “birthday triplets” with The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the town of Bracebridge! All three celebrate their 150th anniversary in 2025. A weekend of celebration was held at Knox from May 30 to June 1 to honour this special occasion.

On the Friday, the congregation and community gathered for a catered dinner, followed by a drama presentation called “A Trip Back in Time,” written by the Rev. Ken Heron. On Saturday, the congre-

gation hosted a community BBQ at a local park, with former minister the Rev. Michael Barnes and Sunday school member Henry Moore recreating the canoe route taken by early settlers to attend church.

Sunday featured a celebratory worship service during which the children of the Sunday school presented the congregation with a beautiful cross created with individual glass panels that had been decorated by each student. The panels were crafted together in the shape of a cross by longtime Sunday school teacher and former minister the Rev. Michael Barnes, using barn boards from his farm.



Bracebridge Mayor Rick Maloney presented the Rev. Dr. Heather Malnick with a certificate honouring the congregation's 150th anniversary.



The cast of “A Trip Back in Time,” featuring highlights from the congregation's past with a message of hope for the future.



The children of the Sunday school present the congregation with a cross featuring glass panels decorated by each student.



A recreation of the canoe route along the Muskoka River used by early settlers to attend worship.

Cross Comforts

*By David Robinson, St. James
Presbyterian Church in
Charlottetown, P.E.I.*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the congregation at St. James Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I., erected a large wooden cross on its front lawn, accompanied by a receptacle for collecting prayer requests from our community. Our hope was that we could connect with those who were experiencing hardship or difficulties and assure them that they were not alone. We received many prayer requests and honoured them during our Prayers

of Intercession at worship.

Two winters ago, our minister, the Rev. Amanda Henderson-Bolton, suggested an additional outreach to the community using the prayer cross. The city had experienced a brutal cold snap, and our church communicated with civic officials our concern that unhoused people in the city were not all given the support they needed to keep them safe from the extreme weather. Our new mission, which we have dubbed “Cross Comforts,” was born out of that concern. We collected gently used, clean toques, scarves, mittens and gloves from congrega-



The “cross comforts” in front of St. James Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown.

tion members and pinned them to the cross, along with a sign that simply said: “Please take what you need.”

Judging from the rate at which these small items of cold weather

clothing disappeared from the cross, we were meeting a real need for the unhoused or those who were not sufficiently well off to dress safely for the cold weather.

Last summer, we modified this mission to also address the summertime safety of the unhoused and struggling in the city. We pinned ball caps, cotton bandanas, sunscreen and lip balm to the cross. Once again, there was a strong uptake to this outreach from members of our community.

We have continued with this mission to the present, and the demand for our “Cross Comforts” has grown over time. This summer, we put out nearly double the number of summer items as last year, and still there was demand. Luckily, we received a very welcome grant from the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces mission fund this spring. When a heat wave hit

the city in mid-July, just as our supply of items for the cross was exhausted, we used half of the mission grant to quickly purchase additional items. Each morning, we filled the cross with about six ball caps, six bandanas, six tubes of sunscreen and six tubes of lip balm. Each subsequent morning of the heat wave, the cross stood empty, and we replenished it again. In this way, we were able to address the health and safety needs within our community at a time when weather might have put them at risk.

We look forward to repeating this outreach during the upcoming winter season and have taken advantage of off-season sales to purchase a large quantity of toques, scarves, mittens and gloves to place on the cross once the cold weather returns. In this way, we hope to continue to love our neighbours as ourselves.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Sharing Food, with Faith

By Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Director

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself?... Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? (Isaiah 58:5, 7)

October 16 is World Food Day, a day when we are reminded that access to food is a fundamental right for all. Article 25 of the



In Haiti, malnourished children are receiving life-saving treatment with support from PWS&D and other Canadian denominations.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

Food is to be shared. We invite our siblings around the world to share in the abundance of food that God has provided on this earth. Unfortunately, it is not as abundant everywhere and for everyone. Our challenge is to provide new avenues to meet people's basic needs where food access is lacking.

As a member of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, we can celebrate the fact that we are part of a great story of food sharing. Last year alone, the Foodgrains Bank contributed nearly \$75 million worth of food assistance and food security projects with financial support from the Government of Canada. PWS&D was part of



Growing projects, like this one supported by the ecumenical Danforth Grow Hope initiative, grow crops to sell in Canada and use the funds to help end hunger around the world.

that story as we led initiatives with partners in Haiti, Malawi, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Guatemala—providing food in times of distress, along with training and support for farmers to improve their harvests on their small plots of land.

Jesus loved to share food, and we are provided with examples of him multiplying small quantities of food to help as many people as possible. Remember the story of the loaves and fishes, and how much was left after all had enjoyed their fill? Remember the fishermen who saw their nets miraculously filled at a time when they had lost hope?

"When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down

your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink" (Luke 5:4-7).

In faith, we too can listen to Jesus' voice to guide us as we seek both to find and to share the bounty of abundance around us.

Here in Canada, abundance is found in the fields that produce grain and beans in the Prairies and across the land. It is on fields like these that farmers work together as part of growing pro-

jects. Crops are sold and the proceeds are provided to Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which in turn supports PWS&D projects overseas. Those funds are multiplied up to four times and contribute to projects to help alleviate hunger.

Through growing projects, abundance is shared as it should be. God's table is brought to Earth, and we are all guests at the table. It's an inclusive "we," where the first invitation goes to those who are most hungry.

In the past year, PWS&D, with the support of other denominations, helped to save children's lives in Haiti through a therapeutic feeding project. A food assistance project in Afghanistan helped many women and children have enough nutritious food to live fuller lives. Thanks to ecumenical collaborations and against all odds, PWS&D has provided food assistance in Gaza, despite barriers to aid delivery.

God calls us to share our food with the hungry. How will we take what we have and multiply it to reach as many people as possible? PWS&D, with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, offers a pragmatic way to be part of this story of multiplication: last year, the Foodgrains Bank reached nearly a million people in 35 countries. This is faith at work. And it all begins with the act of sharing, as Jesus did.

Gaza Aid Brings Relief

By Stephanie Chunoo, PWS&D Communications

Ibrahim Atallah is one of many Palestinians in Gaza whose life has been severely affected by the conflict that worsened after October 2023. As a father, Ibrahim now looks after his three-year-old son, who has a disability and highly specific dietary needs. His son eats only a few simple items, mainly biscuits and milk, which have become nearly impossible to obtain due to shortages and rising prices in the market.

Like many families in Gaza, Ibrahim has struggled to find enough food to meet even the most basic needs. As the humanitarian situation worsened, access to safe shelter, water and food became increasingly limited. In response to widespread displacement and food insecurity, PWS&D supported a Canadian Foodgrains Bank project, which

distributed ready-to-eat and mixed food parcels to displaced, conflict-affected families across Gaza City and North Gaza. These parcels were designed to meet the immediate needs of individuals without access to functioning kitchens, cooking fuel or stable incomes.

Ibrahim was among the participants selected to receive this assistance in Gaza City. When he received a parcel, he said it made a significant difference, not only in easing his financial stress but also in boosting the health of his young son. "This parcel will alleviate his suffering and provide my child with the necessary food," Ibrahim shared. The ma'amoul (date) biscuits included in the kit brought immediate comfort to his son and helped decrease the family's dependence on expensive, hard-to-find goods in the local market.

"I felt happy when I received

the message that I would be a participant of the aid distributions," he shared. "[The partner] cares about the opinions and challenges of the participants... [and] that makes us feel that we have rights. We do not feel embarrassed or insulted when receiving the parcels," remarked Ibrahim.

PWS&D's Gaza response

As violence continues in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, humanitarian needs on the ground only increase, while the ability to deliver aid remains an ongoing challenge.

Despite the challenges, PWS&D continues to respond through our ecumenical networks and partnerships at ACT Alliance and Canadian Foodgrains Bank to provide food and other humanitarian assistance where and whenever possible. Yet, the need is still immense, and we need your help to



Food distributions in Gaza City. PHOTO CREDIT: CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

respond.

Your support will enable PWS&D and our partners to provide cash and food assistance, access to water and sanitation services, shelter, primary health care, and mental health support. As a result, families like Ibrahim's will be able to meet their basic needs.

To learn more and support PWS&D's Gaza response, please visit WeRespond.ca/Gaza.

* With files from Development and Peace (Caritas Canada).



Ibrahim collecting his ready-to-eat food parcel from a distribution point in Gaza City. PHOTO CREDIT: CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Water is Life

By Dr. Brett H. Meyer,
PWS&D Committee co-convenor

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37–38).

From May 5–16, 2025, a group of Presbyterians from Ontario and Quebec visited PWS&D's projects in Guatemala. Brett, who is a co-convenor of PWS&D's committee, was a member of the delegation. He is an Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at McGill University, and attends St. Columba by-the-Lake Presbyterian Church in Pointe-Claire, Que.

Eliuteria Alion Tomás, a Maya Mam farmer in Comitancillo, San Marcos, thought that she was too old to see the day when she'd have reliable access to water. In Comitancillo, you're always thinking about water. People often have a municipal water source, but there's no telling when the water will be on. Eliuteria knows the value of reliable access to clean

water: it means healthier families, healthier farms and a healthier environment. Water is life, and water is prosperity, not only for humans, but for all creatures.

Our time in Comitancillo was marked by limited access to water. Comitancillo is in the western highlands of Guatemala. Its water is not considered safe to drink, and even in the heart of the city of 90,000, water storage is essential. Our ability to shower, wash our hands, flush a toilet, all depended on whether the water was on, and if not? Then, it depended on whether there was water in the *pila*.

A *pila*, a Guatemalan essential, is a sink, often concrete, divided into three sections. In the middle there is a basin for freshwater storage, typically about 90 litres. (According to data from Statistics Canada, the average Canadian uses over 200 litres a day.) Washing happens in the left and right sections of the *pila*. To keep the basin water clean, you scoop water from it to use over the work areas on the sides. *When the water is on, you fill your pila*. But what if rather than being off for part of the day, as was our experience at the hotel, the water is off for days



The 2,500-litre water tank is crucial to the success of this tree nursery, an enterprise run by Maya Mam women and supported by PWS&D. The trees aid reforestation efforts, while fruit trees help improve dietary diversity.

at a time?

Access to a reliable water supply is transformative, not only because it supports daily health and hygiene, but also because it supports farming productivity. This is especially clear if we look at the corn fields. Unlike in North America, where corn is planted in the spring and "knee high by the Fourth of July," as my grandmother would say, in May in Guatemala we saw corn in every stage of development: just planted, maturing, just harvested. We also saw yet unplanted fields that we were told would be corn (and beans and squash) once the rains came.

This year, the rainy season—May to October—is getting a late start, delaying planting. Reliable access to water supports irrigation. That can mean three or more plantings and harvests in a calendar year, and in turn better nutrition and greater income.

Eliuteria has a relatively large farm, at 32 *cuerdas* (20m x 20m). Until recently, reliable access to water complicated daily living as well as farming. Though she has a municipal tap, it only works a couple of days a week. Through her participation with AMMID, PWS&D's local partner, she received a water tank that can hold 2,500 litres. When the water is on, Eliuteria fills her tank, making it possible to fill her *pila* for daily

water use, and provide water for her farm. During the rainy season, she also collects rainwater runoff from the roof of her home; this goes in the tank, too.

AMMID's goal is *el buen vivir*—the well-being—of Indigenous Maya Mam people in the region of San Marcos. AMMID works with 1,500 families across 46 communities, in support of: food sovereignty, Mayan equity and identity, public health and the defence of Mother Earth. Through its work with AMMID, PWS&D has financed the installation of 131 water tanks like Eliuteria's, directly improving the daily lives of many families and investing in local enterprises, e.g., a tree nursery.

AMMID, with its emphasis on the defence of Mother Earth—*Madre Tierra, Qtxu Tx'otx'*—takes a comprehensive approach to caring for the entire local living water system, and all those creatures dependent upon it. AMMID's work to combat deforestation, and consequent soil erosion and water system degradation, is a particularly illustrative example. Deforestation occurs in part because wood, a key energy source, is used for cooking as well as boiling water to make it safe for consumption.

AMMID works to improve water safety by distributing eco filters, teaching organic farm-

ing practices and encouraging the reduction of consumption of single-use plastics. This reduces the need for boiling, reducing wood use. AMMID also supports the development of local tree nurseries, and execution of reforestation projects. Finally, the agency teaches youth in its Political Formation School about the importance of advocacy and civic engagement with respect to environmental concerns.

Eliuteria's daughter, Mariela, and her family recently returned to live near Eliuteria and work her land. Mariela will inherit this land, she told us proudly, as will Mariela's daughter in the future. Her water tank will do much to secure a better future. Their story, and the stories of the many who have benefited from the work of AMMID, in partnership with PWS&D, demonstrates the transformative power of clean water.

Consider how your life would change if you lost something we take for granted daily: turn on the faucet and clean water comes. Imagine giving your children the gift of water in a world where the life and success of families and communities hinges on it. Rivers of living water, indeed!

To learn more about—and support—PWS&D's work in Guatemala, visit WeRespond.ca/Guatemala.



Eliuteria Alion Tomás, her daughter Mariela, and her granddaughter, three generations of Maya Mam Indigenous women.

Images and Videos for Worship

Download for visual presentations during worship services, announcements and church gatherings, and use on your congregation's website and social media channels.

Visit presbyterian.ca/worship-images



PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Advocate for Afghan Refugees

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, the United Nations estimates that 1.6 million people have fled the country for safety elsewhere. Of these, 700,000 have made their way to neighbouring Pakistan, making the population of Afghan refugees in Pakistan reach over 2.5 million at its highest point.

Tensions have risen over the past year between the government of Pakistan and the Taliban *de facto* government in Afghanistan, and the millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan are paying the price.

Since early 2025, the Pakistani government has been implementing a plan to send back undocumented Afghans, as well as those who have temporary permission to stay. The number of people at risk of being forcibly returned to Afghanistan is staggering, as over half of the refugees being hosted in Pakistan originate from there. In April, between 700 and 800 families were being deported daily.

These deportations pose devastating risks—particularly for women and girls—who face heightened threats of violence, persecution and loss of access to basic rights upon return to their home country. These actions violate international protection



Families are being forced to return to Afghanistan from Pakistan, regardless of security concerns and legal claims to asylum status.

principles and erode decades of humanitarian efforts to safeguard vulnerable populations.

A 23-year-old Afghan woman describes the experience her family faced. “They arrested my dad with my brother, and they deported them. It was tough for me and [before they were deported] they told me, if you go back to Afghanistan, you will die or maybe get married by force.” This young woman now lives

alone in Pakistan, separated from her family and terrified daily about being deported.

Already facing an immense humanitarian crisis, Afghanistan will be challenged to absorb such a large number of returnees, more than two thirds of whom have never lived in the country.

In response, PWS&D and our local partner in Afghanistan are calling on the Government of Canada to take action to urge the

Government of Pakistan to

- immediately halt the deportations of Afghan refugees;
- uphold the rights to protection, safety and dignity for all displaced individuals;
- commit to durable, rights-based solutions for those fleeing conflict and oppression.

To watch a video about the issue and download a sample advocacy letter, visit [WeRespond.ca/advocate-for-Afghan-refugees](https://www.werespond.ca/advocate-for-Afghan-refugees).

Earning a Good Income in Nepal

By Emma Goldstein,
PWS&D Communications

“Even with a small piece of land, it’s possible to earn a good income with low investment.”

These words of Ankhu Jaishi, a 30-year-old program participant from the Kalikot district of Nepal, describe the ethos of farmers around the world who participate in self-help groups, where they share knowledge about conservation agriculture techniques to make modest plots of land work harder and produce more, in the face of increasingly challenging

climates.

Ankhu and her husband support their four children, as well as his mother. Prior to Ankhu’s participation in the project, having enough food to meet their daily needs was difficult. So was paying for clothing and school fees for the children. As a result, Ankhu’s husband was forced to seek seasonal work in India.

Since 2023, PWS&D has been supporting a three-year project through International Nepal Fellowship to help the most marginalized groups in the area where Ankhu lives. Her circumstances

improved when she joined a self-help group through the project and received farming inputs, like: a plastic greenhouse; drip irrigation set; vegetable seeds; plastic drums and sprayers; as well as training on climate-resilient farming. The vegetables Ankhu can now grow and sell at the market are diverse—cauliflower, cabbage, radishes, cucumbers, tomatoes, chilis, garlic, onions, beans, pumpkins and potatoes fill her plot of land.

As a model farmer, Ankhu’s farm is an example to others in her community, and she teaches them about the techniques that made a difference for her. Ankhu proudly shared, “Joining the self-help group changed my life.”

Beyond Subsistence Farming

Nepal sits very low on the human development index; among South Asian countries, it ranks stronger than only Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Over 80 percent of the country’s population is engaged in agriculture to meet their food needs, including in Kalikot. However, only around four percent of households in the district have



Pictured harvesting tomatoes, Ankhu, a model farmer, shares with others the conservation agriculture techniques she’s learned through a PWS&D-supported program.

enough agricultural production to be food secure every month of the year. Working largely as subsistence farmers, many do not have awareness of or access to advanced technologies, such as irrigation facilities. This insufficiency leads to a high rate of seasonal migration—often the men in marginalized households make their way out of the community and even into a different country to support their families.

PWS&D’s programming in Kalikot provides the supplies people need to plant and harvest from their farms year-round. Goats are also given to households participating in the program. Equally important, utilizing model farms

like Ankhu’s, the program provides guidance on how to implement more climate-resilient farming approaches. Using the techniques they learn—such as nursery management, drip irrigation, implementation of organic fertilizers, mulching, intercropping and planting disease-resistant varieties—farmers increase the number of months their land can be productive, which provides them with enough food for daily consumption and to sell at the local market.

In 2024, an estimated 1,492 individuals—of whom 65% were women—directly participated in project activities, working together for better food security and a better future.



Irrigation facilities, like this one that a self-help group is working on, are also part of the project.

BOOKS

A Review of *The Spiritualist Prime Minister*

By Dr. Robert Revington

The Spiritualist Prime Minister,
2 vols.
Written by Anton Wagner
Guildford, Surrey: White Crow
Books, 2024

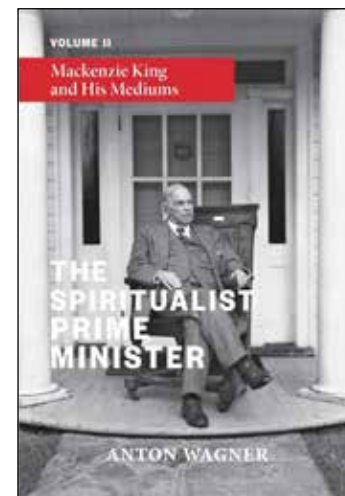
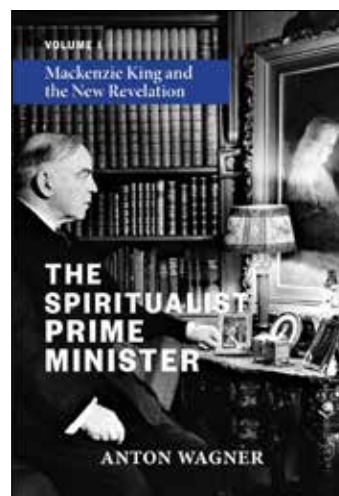
It is important to know what Anton Wagner's new biography of Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874–1950) both is and is not. Readers who want a more traditional overview of King's life would be advised to turn to Allan Levine's 2011 biography. Although Wagner's two-volume study, *The Spiritualist Prime Minister*, includes a helpful chronology of King's life as an appendix at the end of the first volume, this biography will be best appreciated by those who already know the basic outline of his life. Having said this, taken on its own terms, the roughly 800 pages of this work offer an exceptionally detailed study of King, but focused on one specific area: his spiritualist beliefs. Parts of this work could even serve as an outline of the history of spiritualism itself.

King's time as prime minister—spanning most of the years from 1921 to 1948—makes him “Canada's longest-serving Prime Minister” and “one of the longest serving elected leaders in the Western world,” and he has been called “Canada's greatest Prime Minister” (vol. 1, p. 21). In spite of these achievements, he

is also known for his occult and spiritualist idiosyncrasies—to the point that his sanity is sometimes questioned (vol. 1, 21). Wagner observes that “three major conflicts in Mackenzie King's character shaped his life and actions: his religious faith, his uncontrollable sex drive, and his spiritualist beliefs and occult practices” (vol. 2, p. 323). People have not always wanted this last area in particular to be publicly known. Some of the most interesting parts of Wagner's work examine how King's literary executors tried (and ultimately failed) to suppress knowledge of this aspect of King's life. For example, King's executors coerced a spiritualist writer named Geraldine Cummins not to include King's name in an appendix to her 1951 memoir. King's “spiritualist notebooks” were burned in 1977, although some of his other personal spiritualist accounts survived (vol. 2, p. 101). One can understand why this kind of suppression was considered necessary to protect King's reputation. Canadians may have been unnerved to learn (as one example) that King was asking U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt for advice on whether to expose Russian spies “or give the secret of the atom bomb to the Russians” in the aftermath of the Gouzenko Affair in 1945 (vol. 1, 347; vol. 2, pp. 256–57). That is because Roosevelt was dead by then; King was seeking advice from Roosevelt's spirit in

séances! In fact, given that it was not until 1954 that the House of Commons investigated whether to decriminalize fortune-telling and witchcraft, it is at least ambiguous whether some of King's spiritualist practices (such as using a crystal ball) were even legal in his lifetime (vol. 2, p. 61). Communication with spirits from the Beyond allegedly helped King negotiate a trade agreement with the United States, as well (vol. 2, pp. 141–42). Granted, 2025 has shown us that having a head of state take advice from the dead is far from the worst thing to ever happen in Canada–U.S. trade relations!

King was interested in séances and visits with fortune-tellers or trance mediums. Yet, his interest in spiritualism also led him to do such things as: take “automatic writing” messages seriously, read tea leaves, find messages in the shapes in his shaving cream, table rapping, palm readings, receive horoscopes, consult a crystal ball, or find hidden meaning in the placement of the hands on clocks, along with showing an interest in numerology and graphology. The fortune-teller Rachel Bleaney and the American medium Etta Wriedt were among the spiritualist figures King interacted with. He would also find spiritual significance in seeming coincidences in his reading habits: for example, in his reading of the Bible, he saw parallels between the political turmoil he faced in 1926 (the time of the famous



King-Byng Affair) and the account of Paul's shipwreck in the Book of Acts (vol. 2, p. 51).

King is sometimes maligned for having séances with his dead dogs. Yet, I cannot be flippant about these after having read Wagner's biography. The passages detailing King's vigil alongside his dog Pat, before Pat's death, are the most genuinely moving passages in Wagner's work and will be touching to anyone who has ever deeply loved a pet (vol. 2, pp. 292–295). King believed that Pat's bark would be the first sound to greet him in Heaven (vol. 2, p. 311).

One of this biography's biggest contributions is to demonstrate that King's spiritualism *did* influence his political life—a fact which older works on King (such as those by H. Blair Neatby) have downplayed. Among other things, King's involvement with spiritualism may have influenced “his appeasement of Hitler and Mussolini” (vol. 2, p. 330). In 1934 in particular, King's “little table” conversations were guiding his decisions to an unhealthy degree (vol. 1, p. 133). After the spirit of the late Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier allegedly—and wrongly—predicted the results of the 1934 Ontario provincial election, King admittedly “determined that he should only trust commu-

nications from his own family in the Beyond” (vol. 1, p. 141). That same year, King's spiritual guides also inaccurately predicted who Prime Minister R. B. Bennett would recommend for knighthood (vol. 1, pp. 143–144). Some people might question the reliability of such communications altogether after such experiences, but King was more apt to attribute these inaccuracies to evil spirits (vol. 1, p. 144). King also made use of séances when trying to figure out the complicated political situation in Europe in 1936 (vol. 2, p. 161). King believed that he was being guided by spirits from the Beyond throughout his life.

King was both a spiritualist and a Presbyterian. His Presbyterian friend—and former Knox College principal—Thomas Eakin appears in some anecdotes in these pages. There is some discussion of King's Presbyterian family background and beliefs (vol. 1, pp. 65–66). King believed himself to have “a God-given mission to bring about peace on earth” (vol. 2, p. 159). King even suggested that Winston Churchill's heroics during the Second World War “almost confirmed the old Presbyterian idea of predestination or pre-ordination; of his having been the man selected for this task” (vol. 2, p. 251). Yet, it is King's spiritualism that predominates over his Presbyterian beliefs in these volumes—and the PCC has, of course, never endorsed spiritualism.

As I have said, for people who are not already familiar with the basic events of King's life, this biography may be harder to follow. Also, the thematic nature of the chapters sometimes means that the work is not chronological and the changes in subject from one chapter to another can make the work seem disjointed at times. Nonetheless, this biography is an impressive achievement and is an excellent read for those who want to thoroughly engage with this side of Mackenzie King.

Check out the PCC's Social Action Hub

The Hub contains information and resources on living out God's call to do justice. It is an online collection of justice-related educational, liturgical and advocacy resources.

presbyterian.ca/social-action



A Review of *Cairo 1921*

By the Rev. Daniel Scott, St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont.

Cairo 1921: Ten Days that Made the Middle East
 Written by C. Brad Faught
 Yale University Press, 2022

During the COVID-19 lockdown, my friend and colleague at Tynedale University, unable to teach in person, completed his manuscript for *Cairo 1921: Ten Days that Made the Middle East*. Professor Faught said, "Everyone had to come up with their own way of enduring the upheavals of those unlovely months; working on this book about the Cairo Conference of 1921 was mine" (p. ix).

The "unlovely months" related to the pandemic were followed by the horrific events of October 7, 2023, resulting in the ongoing Israel-Hamas Hostage War crisis. A month or so before the hostilities had begun, I read Dr. Faught's book and it had given context to the current affairs. Faught provides a clear overview of the Cairo Conference in 1921, based on his careful reading of the personal letters, cablegrams and conference documents of the significant gathering convened in Cairo, Egypt in 1921, which led to the creation of the modern "Middle East" (a term that was just beginning to be used). Insights

into the present-day situation can be greatly aided by reading this measured, careful analysis of the founding of what has become the nation states of Iraq and Jordan as part of the Sherifan Solution, and the eventual establishment of a Jewish homeland—the future state of Israel.

The Cairo Conference in 1921 had left an indelible imprint on the region in an attempt to redraw the map of the Middle East after the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. It was convened by Winston Churchill and included such significant personalities as the Arab advocate T. E. Lawrence (*Lawrence of Arabia*, who was as much of an international celebrity then as Taylor Swift is today) and the Arabic-speaking Gertrude Bell. Although dominated by the British, other voices were heard in an ambitious, albeit unsuccessful, bid to create modern nation states in the region.

In a conversation with Sir John Jenkins, held at the University of Cambridge's Centre for Geopolitics on October 18, 2024, Professor Faught had referred to the misguided understanding of many chronologists of the important Cairo Conference. He said it was, "dubbed by some as political theatre, Winston's folly, hot air and aeroplanes, a kind of political stunt (unserious)," but after pok-

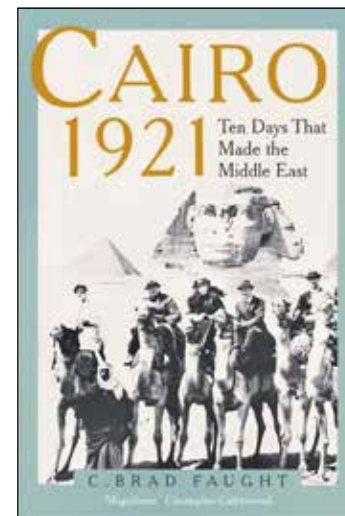
ing around in archives to prepare biographies of Allenby and Kitchener, Faught had come to a different conclusion. This led him to surmise that the Cairo Conference needed to be given a thorough analysis and not rely on characterizations. The result, says Sir John Jenkins, is a "beautifully written" account of an important geopolitical event.

The book attempts to probe the official mind and to determine what the participants were thinking and their motivations. *Paris 1919* and *San Marino 1920* have received more attention, but *Cairo 1921* had not been examined, probed and interpreted. Faught gives attention to important and unresolved matters, such as: how to create unity through British wartime policy; what to do with the Balfour Declaration (a public statement issued by the British government that declares support for the establishment of "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine), the Sykes-Picot Agreement (a secret accord between Britain and France in dividing up the Ottoman Empire), and the McMahon-Hussein correspondence (a series of letters that implied the British government would recognize Arab independence in a large region). Faught does a masterful job of explaining how these items were discussed and decided upon.

Not only does *Cairo 1921* help us to understand this significant conference, but it also provides a way for the reader to become aware of the major actors ("comprising just thirty-nine delegates" (p. 97), and places, such as the Savoy Palace Hotel and the "opulent riverside Semiramis Hotel" (p. 92). And Faught does so, on at least two occasions, with humorous anecdotes.

The first anecdote is set up in the preface when Faught explains the iconic photograph of the event. Churchill, his wife Clementine Churchill, Gertrude Bell, T. E. Lawrence and Walter Thompson are seated on camels in front of the Sphinx. Bell and Lawrence, "veterans both of long passages in the desert, had in the past spent months riding camels... Churchill and Clementine, on the other hand, had never ridden a camel in their lives" (p. 2). Much later in the book, Faught describes the result: "En route, Churchill endured an uncomfortable moment when his camel's saddle loosened, causing him to slide off its back and land with a thump in the sand. 'How the mighty have fallen,' quipped Clementine" (p. 135).

The second humorous situation happened at "the reception hosted by the Allenby's at the British Residency at the conclusion of the opening day of the Cairo Conference." Apparently,



Sir Geoffrey Archer, the governor of British Somaliland, arrived at the reception with his two playful lion cubs in tow. The British Residency had tremendous tropical gardens overlooking the Nile. In the garden lived a marabou stork. "It was something of a pet to the high commissioner and as such the massive bird had taken to following him around...guarding him in a distinctly jealous manner against any human or animal intrusions" (p. 100). Imagine what happened when the cubs and stork came into contact. Based on Lord Allenby's letters, Faught describes how the cubs and stork "provided a welcome distraction from the serious business of state-making" (p. 110).

Faught's attention to detail in *Cairo 1921* is precisely what makes it a good read. And, hopefully, it will help readers better understand the conflicts in the Middle East today.

Evangelism in an Age of Despair

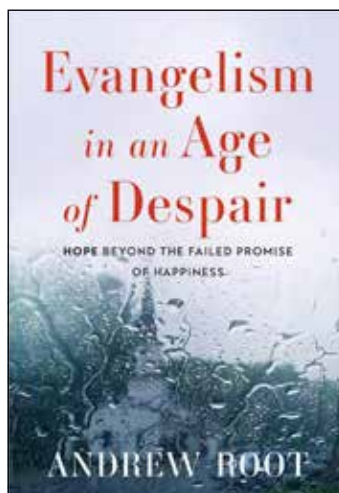
By the Rev. Blair D. Bertrand,
 international mission staff

Evangelism in an Age of Despair: Hope Beyond the Failed Promise of Happiness
 By Andrew Root
 Baker Academic, 2025

Full disclosure: I read a draft of this book before it was published. Even more full disclosure: I've read every book that Andrew Root has written, most also in draft. We have been long-time friends and collaborators. We've even written articles and books together. Safe to say, I am biased and I know his work. So, I think that I'm qualified to say that Root's latest book, *Evangelism in an Age of Despair*, uses his regular formula to push his general project into the area of evangelism. That regular formula includes a fictional narrative thread that gives some flesh to the ideas. Here, the story centres

on the relationships between a pastor and a small group of women who are there for each other in the highs and, especially, the lows. Even more than some of his other stories, this one really lands and is well told.

The formula also has a historical component. Root constructs genealogies of ideas, tracing them back from our current context to their origins in the past. In this case, he goes back to French philosopher Montaigne and traces the idea of happiness backwards and forwards through time. This leads into the third part of the formula, a sharp-eyed critique of our contemporary setting. Many will be familiar with Root's *Ministry in a Secular Age* series, where he uses the work of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor to great effect. Here, he adds Stephen Toulmin and Byung-Chul Han. He focuses on the pursuit of happiness as a life goal and how this will ulti-



mately fall short as being fulfilling. Finally, the formula addresses a core practice of the church. Here, it is evangelism, which is critiqued in its current form and a counter-intuitive alternative is proposed. The critique is that the church has associated evangelism with happiness when, in fact, the good news is for us in our suffering. Part of the constructive work draws on

resources from the past. Here, it is a church mother, Macrina, and Boethius and Gerson.

For those most familiar with Root's recent work, this book might surprise, because it returns to a theme he has explored extensively in earlier works, such as *The Promise of Despair: The Way of the Cross as the Way of the Church*. Following along the lines of theologians like Canadian Douglas John Hall, Root is a theologian of the cross. The cross is a hard sell at any time because it wraps God's identity up in suffering and death. When it comes to contemporary approaches to evangelism, the cross is a definite stumbling block. This is Root's point. When we centre happiness as the goal of life, then evangelism becomes a way of achieving that happiness. Accept Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour and your life will be better. Root does not deny that the good news does

make life better, but he proposes an alternative—we enter into the life of God through the suffering of Jesus on the cross.

Root is one of the most important voices writing about practical theology in the world today. We neglect his scholarship at our peril. I am unabashedly a booster. But his writing is not for everyone. This is not the book to hand to a Session for a study before launching a new evangelism campaign, for two reasons. First, he goes deep into areas where many would want a surface treatment. Second, his thinking doesn't lead to clear pragmatic outcomes. He is not impractical—far from it with the stories, the cultural engagement, the connections to church life. But there is no program here, so pragmatically oriented people will get frustrated. With these caveats, this book has much to offer a church looking forward with hope and possibility.

Not Your Typical History Book

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

Recollections + Reflections
 150 Years of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Edited and compiled by
 Ian McKechnie
 Design and layout by
 Ekaterine Alexakis
 The Presbyterian Church in
 Canada, 2025

Recollections + Reflections is a beautifully designed and laid-out book, not the usual church history book. There is a brief history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (nine pages), but it is not the purpose of the book to tell the history of the denomination; rather, the book gives readers a collection of people's stories—people who sought and still seek to follow Jesus as part of congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. That is the true strength of the book, reminding readers that the PCC at its core is not General Assembly or national office, nor is the denomination

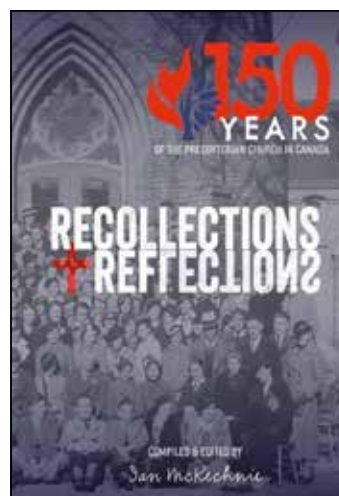
even synods and presbyteries. None of those would exist without the individuals and the groups who make up congregations. This book reminds us that any account of the PCC is rooted in the life of congregations. For it is in the life of congregations where people hear the good news of Jesus read, preached and studied; where they gather around the table to celebrate communion, and join in the holy tasks of rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep.

The book begins with a hymn and ends with a hymn—and before the history and stories unfold, a 6th century painting of Jesus reminds readers that if congregations are central to the life of the PCC, Jesus Christ is central to the life of those congregations.

The brief history includes the statement: "To say that the PCC has a checkered heritage would be an understatement ... It has sinned multiple times over and fallen well short of the glory of God." The section of the book immediately following the brief history explores the ways the

church has sought reconciliation in its relationship with Indigenous peoples. A later section documents the denomination's struggles regarding the role of women, the place of LGBTQI2S+ persons within the church, and the welcome offered to people of other races, ethnicities and cultures. The book does not avoid identifying the church's failures.

Also told are stories of faithfulness and resilience, of ordinary people committed to living Christian lives in their congregations. Ian Grinnell of Trinity Presbyterian Church in York Mills, Ont., tells of growing up in that congregation. After mentioning two ministers, Ian turns to reflect on Aubrey Lewis-Watts—an elder, Sunday school teacher and mentor. It was Aubrey who made an impact in Grinnell's life. This story and others in the book declare the truth that the strength of the church runs through faithful, committed lay people who do not usually show up in church histories but whose impact is written in the lives they have touched in often unnoticed and unheralded ways.



Mona Harris concludes her account of Camp Churchill near Campbellton, N.B., with an almost apologetic paragraph outlining how Knox Presbyterian Church, in Campbellton, no longer has a church building but meets in a seniors' complex where they "now have a seniors ministry" for residents. They are faithfully resilient and committed to serving others in the name of Jesus.

The photographs and images throughout *Recollections + Reflections* are well chosen. A full-page display advertisement invites 800 members of the Toronto PYPS to fill the ship *Dalhousie City* for a picnic at Port Dalhousie. The date of the picnic was June 3, 1939—three months later, Second World War would begin. Reflecting that some 800 PYPS members on that ship would lose their lives or be in other ways

changed by the war is sobering.

An interesting addition to the book is the collection of recipes taken from various congregational recipe books, some dating back to the early 20th century.

René Schmidt's story reminds readers that the Holy Spirit still draws people to become followers of Jesus in the congregations of this awkward and at times faltering denomination we call The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Nudged by the Holy Spirit, Schmidt ended up going to a "dark and gloomy" church building "that did not look promising." The congregation was "a few dozen grey and silver headed souls outnumbering just one family with small children and another with teenage girls." The music was "surprisingly" good, the preaching "Huh! Not bad." Over time, Schmidt was drawn in, found a mentor, joined the choir and grew in faith. In this way, readers are reminded of the real history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada: people meeting and following Jesus.

This is not your typical history book—and is worthy of serious engagement. Ian McKechnie, as compiler and editor, and Ekaterine Alexakis, as designer and layout artist, are to be thanked for their gift to the church.

To order a copy of *Recollections + Reflections*, visit presbyterian.ca/order.

REFLECTIONS

Preaching in a New Key

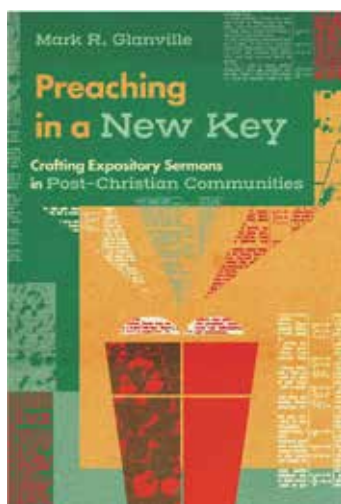
This is an adapted excerpt from Dr. Mark R. Glanville, Centre for Missional Leadership, St. Andrew's Hall in Vancouver, B.C., and author of *Preaching in a New Key: Crafting Expository Sermons in Post-Christian Communities*

One damp afternoon during the fall of 2016, I was sharing a pastoral conversation with Kate, a professional artist in her late twenties. Over years of meals and conversations, we had formed a trusting relationship, and the previous year Kate had shared with me her growing doubts in her journey with Christ. "Evangelicalism seems so cold-hearted," she would say. "Why doesn't the church care about the creation? And about art and artists?" We both knew that our own church

cared about these things, but the negligence of the broader church on these issues worried her. In fact, it rocked her faith. This day she told me hesitatingly that she was going to take a year off from attending church to give herself space to sort out her faith. We are still good friends, but Kate never returned to worship regularly. Kate no longer identifies as Christian.

Kate was experiencing a profound disconnect between her values and the wider church: values around beauty, justice, community and creation, and of course, these values are found throughout scripture.

This disconnect of values amplified a disconnect that was already there, a baseline of disconnection between Christian faith



and her life experience. "What about other religions," Kate would ask. "How can we presume that we are right and they are wrong?" For Kate, Christianity didn't resonate at the level of *plausibility*. Through coffees and conversations with dozens of people, I learned to recognize this disconnection of plausibility and values that Kate experienced. I realized that this is the experience of many people who remain in the church, not only young people, but people of all ages, including Boomers. Many people in your church are

struggling with doubt: not a doubt that can be solved at a rational level, but a doubt that resides at the level of plausibility and values.

How do we preach in our cultural context today, where people's experience of faith is so contested? How can we preach when many of our people don't assume that scripture is authoritative? Rather, they have complex relationships with scripture.

There is a lot to it, to be sure. Our role as preachers is to nourish faith. Nourishing faith today is less about evidence for the resurrection, and more about valuing justice and compassion. It is less about faith vs science, more about nurturing communities of hope. One key strategy is what I call "reversing the direction of flow." Reversing the direction of flow lies at the heart of my book, *Preaching in a New Key: Crafting Expository Sermons in Post-Christian Communities*.

Reversing the direction of flow in preaching

For the most part, it isn't helpful to preach sermons on doubt

(though, you may do so with high emotional and relational intuition). Rather, we assume doubt and curiosity and allow that to shape the way that we approach every sermon. The key question is: How can we display the wisdom of Christ and the beauty of scripture in contexts where these can't be taken for granted? Be encouraged: we can learn to hold out the word of life in a way that is responsive to the complex relationships our people have with scripture. This is an art, not a science, and one-on-one pastoral conversations are key to growing a pastoral intuition for the task.

We desire to preach *from* scripture *into* the church, do we not? And, when I started out as a preacher, that logical flow worked well: simply declaring God's word to us in scripture. We were heralds of the King. Yet how people come to church has shifted. If in years past, people walked to church with the Bible in their hands, in post-Christian cultures, many of our people

Continued on page 35

Continued from page 34

walk into church with questions on their mind, often good questions, like: Will people here understand me? What about racism? Why do I feel anxious and depressed?

As our people may not share a conviction regarding the authority of scripture, we need to reverse the flow of thought. Here's how: on any given Sunday, people come to church with some good values and big dreams for the world. And they come to church with grief, anger and trauma. (You can be certain that there is a broken heart on every pew.) Our challenge is to show how Jesus, as revealed to us in the grand story of scripture, outdoes our best imaginings and meets us in our grief. Scripture holds out an invitation to a shared life much more beautiful than we ourselves could have thought up in our grandest dreams. And Christ meets us in our emptiness, like no one else.

You might say that we are nourishing faith in scripture, even as we nourish faith in Jesus. To do so, we display the beauty of Christ and of Christ's way with help from scripture. With the Bible in our hands, we can show how scripture, and Christ as he is revealed in scripture, outshines our best solutions and meets us in our struggles! In a sense, we are arguing for scripture's authority without saying as much. Or better, we are making space for scripture to argue for itself. We are demonstrating scripture's authority from its capacity to respond to our lives rather than through assertions or philosophical defences of its value. The key point is that we are displaying the wisdom of Christ and the beauty of scripture in contexts where this is by no means assumed.

What does it mean to display the wisdom of Christ and the beauty of scripture in our preaching? By "reversing the flow," I am not suggesting merely reversing the order in which we present our ideas. Rather, this is an intuitive, aesthetic, and pastoral approach to expository preaching that begins not with the whole congregation's conviction of the authority of scripture (though that would be nice), but with my *own* conviction that the text I am preaching has been written to nourish the beloved community by the Spirit's inspiration.

As an exegete, I need to keep studying the text until I glimpse the gold—that is, until I hear God's address to my community, inviting us into something more beautiful. I am like a tireless prospector, saying: "I know there is gold here, and I will keep



Reversing the direction of flow in preaching. Graphic by Ella Ensheimer.

digging until I find it." By studying the text thoroughly, on its own terms, and by *reversing the flow*, we participate in healing the congregation's relationship with scripture.

Preaching Colossians 3:1–17

Let me illustrate reversing the direction of flow, taking Colossians 3:1–17 as an example. Again, we are seeking to display how scripture, and Jesus as he is revealed in all of scripture, invites us into something more wonderful than we could come up with ourselves. We are using our aesthetic intuition and emotional intelligence to display the beauty of Jesus in the text, for our congregation includes listeners who are not convinced that scripture is good for them.

This well-known passage begins: "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1). And it continues: "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (12–13).

Preachers often focus on the metaphor of clothing ourselves, in verse 10: "clothe yourselves with the new self." A traditional flow for preaching this text might be:

- (1) Motivation: "you have been raised with Christ": Christ's glory, that he shares with us;
- (2) A call to put off the old self: these behaviours have died, along with our old self;
- (3) A call to put on the new self: we take off scruffy clothes, to be dressed in classy threads.

A rather drab traditional sermon on this text might simply challenge our sinful behaviour and call us to something better. Period. A more thoughtful sermon might explore how putting on our new self is both our work and Christ's work. Our life in Christ is glorious, and yet our glory is hidden (with Christ's glory) in God. Good—now there's movement. But what else?

I preached on this text as a student pastor in my seminary years. Before I stood up to preach, Mavis, a lady in her 80s, read the passage out loud. Mavis had a reputation for being prayerful and wise. When she came to verse 12, "clothe yourselves with compassion..." Mavis began to weep; she wept all the way to verse 17. I'm sure

that Mavis's tears were a more powerful message than anything I said that day. I never asked Mavis why she cried, but I have a hunch her tears had to do with the complexity of human relationships, and how Jesus' tenderness can melt us. My mother, another wise and prayerful woman (and a therapist), used to speak of the lists in Colossians 3 as lists of "relationship makers" (compassion, kindness, humility, meekness) and "relationship breakers" (anger, wrath, malice, slander). When you think of it in this way, it's difficult to read the passage without tearing up.

Preachers can easily miss the purpose of Colossians 3: the lists of behaviours to put off and to put on are a recipe for living well together *as the community who are raised with Christ*: the text is nourishing the church to bear witness through our contrastive *life*—we witness in *life*, word and deed. Living this way is hard work. When we share life together, up close and personal, we wound one another, we take offence, we hold on to resentment.

If I were preaching Col 3:1–17 this coming Sunday, I would say all of this—but more slowly—including the stories of these two women, while carefully walking the congregation through the text. I would seek to hold

out a beautiful and practical vision for *our* community, from my intimate knowledge of the community. And as I preached on Paul's instruction, "Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive," I imagine that I might briefly lean into psychological insights into forgiveness (while carefully preaching the text). Betty Pries writes, "[Forgiveness] is about releasing the power that an incident (or series of incidents) has over us" (*The Space Between Us*). It's curious that by dying to ourselves to reconcile with others, we also find ourselves and find God.

By the end of the sermon, we are not becoming a loose collection of self-actualized individuals (as is on offer in Western culture), but a community of tenderness, the image of our glorified Christ. We walked into church wondering if we would encounter Christ here. Colossians 3 has helped us to integrate some of the desires, recognized and unrecognized, that we carried with us as we walked into the space, through our unity with the risen Christ. In our approach to preaching this text, we have reversed the flow. Rather than simply pointing to the Bible and declaring, "Thus says the Lord," we have offered an invitation to be the beloved community.

CERTIFICATE IN LAY LEADERSHIP

**Be equipped to lead in prayer,
to share the gospel, and to
provide leadership for mission.**

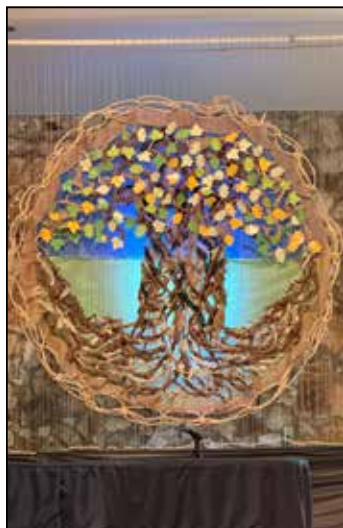


THE
PRESBYTERIAN
COLLEGE
MONTREAL

LE
COLLÈGE
PRESBYTÉRIEN
MONTREAL



Connecting Across Borders



An inspiring art installation from the conference.

By Katy Sniderhan, St. Peter's Presbyterian Church in Madoc, Ont., member of the Collective 2026 planning team

I attended ARW 2025—the Arts, Recreation and Worship Conference—which took place May 5–10 in Montreat, North Carolina, thanks to the support from The Presbyterian Church in Canada and my presbytery.

The theme of ARW 2025 was Intertwined: the Tangle of Community, and what a year for that—the Spirit was clearly moving! The event started with team-building exercises and ice breakers. Throughout the week, many different workshop options supported the theme. You could use your creative side and weave string and fabric to produce a piece of art, or learn a new skill of knot-tying (macramé) and create a practical hammock, or make decorative objects from pottery or stained glass.

Workshops were held on topics of worship and ministry, where discussions focused on the challenges of today's context, culture, and how to get out of tangled conflicts and grow as a church. Recreational classes provided participants with the opportunity to hike in the Appalachian Moun-



Chelsey MacLean, Jessica Foy, the Rev. Todd Tracey of the PC(USA), and Katy Sniderhan and her service dog, Skye, at the annual ARW fundraising auction Garden Party.

tains or develop leadership and planning skills.

I was blessed to attend this event in the North Carolinian mountains. I challenged myself and got over my inability to tie complicated knots and created a hammock! I am now planning a hammock-making workshop in my own community.

During the event, we learned how to run recreational gatherings by developing skills to help groups get to know one another, make people laugh and feel at ease, and mix strangers together so they can gain new friends. We learned how to know when an activity has run its course and it's time to move on, so that the flow of the events never falter.

Though there are no youth at my church, I will take these skills and use them with my local Girl Guide unit, and I can support oth-

ers who may run similar events. This also further equips me, as the accessibility consultant for Collective 2026, when developing accommodations for all to participate. Collective is a spirit-filled gathering for youth, young adults and their leaders—a space to grow in faith, build community and reflect on shared experiences. The Collective 2026 event will take place at Brock University in St. Catharine's, Ont., from August 12 to 15, 2025.

Every morning at ARW, we had worship with Beth Mueller, band leading inspirational music and the Rev. Jimmie Ray Hawkins preaching powerful messages about staying connected during tough times. Though his messages were geared towards an American context, there were many parts that crossed the border to us in Canada.



Katy Sniderhan, Chelsey MacLean and Jessica Foy at the ARW conference.

The powerful music will stick with me for a long time. There was one song in particular, "One Day," that had such a powerful message and backstory so relevant today. This version of the song was created by Koolulam, who took parts of Matisyahu's song of the same name and created a choir of 3,000 strangers from various backgrounds, including

Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities, to sing the song in English, Hebrew and Arabic, with the message that we hope for a peaceful future, without war, and that all children will be able to play together... One Day.

Our worship hall had a beautiful art installation made from tissue and string intertwined between rope. Each morning, leadership added to this mural by tying pieces of fabric together, which became the trunk of a tree intertwined with the rope and then messages and prayers were printed onto leaves that adorned the top of the tree.

Of course, every evening we closed with a special event and much fun was had with many laughs. One night was spent enjoying the chaos of a fundraising auction. All funds raised will help offset event costs and supply scholarships, so more people can attend this amazing experience.

I was blessed to benefit from these scholarship funds myself so I could attend, as well as receive a grant from The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and my local presbytery. I hope this will become an annual event for me.



St. Andrew's Hall

St. Andrew's Hall (SAH) is your Presbyterian College in Western Canada, home to a vibrant campus ministry and a community of over 250 students. Through the Centre for Missional Leadership (CML), we are resourcing the church across the country by equipping missional leaders for Christ's church of tomorrow, today.



MORE INFORMATION

1-604-822-9720

6040 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC
V6T2E8

WWW.STANDREWS.EDU

Tie the Tale to the “T” in the Tote



By the Rev. Kenn Stright, retired minister and past KAIROS Atlantic Regional Representative

Time to toss some “Ts” in the tote. It seems I spent a lifetime acquiring T-shirts. I have to choose which ones still fit, which ones pass the “good enough to wear” test and maybe more importantly, which ones still tell a tale I wish to hear.

Okay, it’s time to sort. First come the camp T-shirts—most are from Camp Geddie, where I was chaplain on numerous occasions and on staff a time or two; and a couple were gifts for being a guest speaker, or the time I visited as synod moderator. I can’t keep them all, but one stands out as a gift from the Rev. Donald Walker MacKay who, at the time, was camp director and a dear friend for decades. Donald was one of our long-serving missionaries in Africa, completing several terms in Nigeria and then in Ghana. Yes, this “T” is a tale I retell time and again.

Next come what I will call my Indigenous collection. There is one T-shirt for volunteering at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings in Halifax, another expressing solidarity with the First Nations community of Pictou Landing, N.S., as they demanded the closure of Boat Harbour. I have an Every Child Matters T-shirt, which was a gift from the people of Sipekne’katik (Indian Brook First Nations). The tale I want my “T” to tell takes me back to a truth-telling by the Rev. Stewart Folster in Halifax. He invited me to stand with him as he told his story to the hundreds gathered. Wearing my TRC volunteer T-shirt, I stood with him and held his shoulder as emo-

tion overwhelmed him as he expressed the hurt—and the healing—that have been part of his life.

I have an entire section of T-shirts accumulated from my leadership at the Young Adult Workcamps (CANACOM), held across the Caribbean and Canada over a 14-year period. Each one tells the tale of young adults giving of their time and talent to the cause of Christ, and each one is a reminder to me of the importance of mission in the life of the church. From Brazil, I wear the T-shirt of the 1996 meeting of the Conference on World Mission. I search and fail to find the T-shirt from the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, where I was one of 50 men invited to the 1,200-delegate meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe.

My church collection covers a multitude of decades and issues and organizations, such as KAIROS, the Youth Trienniums (and later Canada Youth). Thanks to my home province of P.E.I. for gifting me one of their Canada Youth T-shirts! I even found my original Congregational Life T (honesty has me admit it is a sweatshirt!), which tells the story of my seven years on the National Congregational Life Committee and its successor, the Life and Mission Agency Committee. The Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators has a number of T-shirts, but I get tired of explaining what “Simply Zwingly” means in our Reformed tradition. And then there is my favourite from this section—my David’s Place T-shirt. What a special place this is. Street people, church people, tourists and anyone walking by finds a warm welcome, warm hospitality and a warm meal,

along with a listening ear and helpful advice. St. David’s Presbyterian Church in Halifax continues this special place, though it has been modified since the Covid pandemic. I need to include one more favourite in this category as I dust off the Congress ’96 T-shirt from the last Congress held by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, where I served as convener of the national committee. The T-shirt tells of two years of hard work and delicate organizing and finally great memories.

Other shirts are in my sailing collection. Every sail maker and every marina and every outlet has a T-shirt to identify their product and are more than willing to give out a free T to anyone who might be a customer, or even a cap or two. In this collection is found one of the passions of my life...sailing. One T is from my very first boat that I raced, but my favourites (let’s see, there are seven of these) come from racing crews over two decades. Each represents a stage in my sailing life and reminds me that being part of a crew, like being part of the church, requires everyone to do their part for the success of the boat.

What’s left in the tote? There is one given to me as a gift from CBC, where I was a community reporter for a decade. Here is another from Guyana, where I was a temporary missionary with the Guyana Presbyterian Church. Then there is that T-shirt from the World Council of Churches when I was in Africa, and a few from secular organizations that I supported over the years. I was gifted a T-shirt or two from ecumenical partners as we met at various conferences.

I wonder what other tales would have been told if I had kept all the other T-shirts over the years. At a KAIROS gathering in Sackville, N.B., we were invited to make a collage of T-shirts to express the justice issues we were involved in as individuals and as a group. The collection was impressive!

Every T-shirt has a tale to tell, and I hope tying the tale to the “T” helps you remember times and events and causes and concerns that have been, and continue to be, important in your life. Wear them with pride.

So, back to sorting the tote... Which ones do I part with, which ones stay?



On Easter Sunday, Akongnie received the sign of God’s covenant love in baptism—a beautiful beginning to a lifelong journey of grace.

Front-Row Seat to Grace



By the Rev. Daniel A. Surya, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Lethbridge, Alta. This article originally appeared at danielasurya.substack.com

This past Easter Sunday, I had the deep privilege of baptizing two beautiful children, surrounded by their family, friends and our church family.

It wasn’t just a ceremony; it was a story being written before our eyes—a sacred beginning, a reminder that faith often starts in the arms of others before it finds its own feet.

Moments like these—this is why I love being a minister. Grace unfolding, joy rising, lives being quietly marked by the hand of God.

After the baptism, something

even more beautiful happened. The family, originally from Cameroon, rose and danced—a celebration, a cultural expression of gratitude to God for the gift of new life and new beginnings. Their joy was contagious. It felt like heaven had leaned a little closer to earth.

Later, we gathered in the gym to share cake and fellowship—simple things, really. Yet, I couldn’t help but think that these “simple things” are often where the deepest graces are found: laughter around tables, hugs exchanged between old friends, children running between chairs, crumbs of joy left behind as evidence that we had truly been together.

Being a minister isn’t about grand sermons or perfect services—though I do love a good sermon and a meaningful service! It’s about standing in the quiet spaces of people’s lives—holding the joy, the tears, the milestones—and bearing witness to God’s quiet, steady faithfulness through it all.

The photos here stir my heart because they remind me that ministry is a front-row seat to grace. Not always loud, not always obvious, but always real.

Every milestone matters. Every life is a story God is still tenderly, patiently, beautifully writing.

And I’m grateful to stand close enough to see it.

Connecting Those Who Care about Christian Education

By Spencer Edwards and Jessica Foy, Life and Mission Agency

Christian Education is at the heart of the church's mission—shaping disciples and equipping the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:12). Christian education happens in our congregations, camps, special events and homes. Many of us have found great joy and meaning in this work, walking alongside others in their journey of faith.

But let's be honest—it can also feel a little lonely.

It's easy to feel like you're figuring things out on your own. You're doing your best with what you have, but sometimes it's hard to know where to turn for ideas, encouragement or a listening ear.

That's where the Christian Education Exchange comes in.

This monthly online gathering

is a space for connection, support and shared learning. Whether you're clergy or lay, full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer, working with children, youth, seniors or across the generations—if you care about nurturing faith, you are welcome.

The meetings are hosted by the Christian Education & Youth Program team, with the occasional special guest. Each session includes opportunities to: share experiences and wisdom with others who "get it"; explore practical resources and fresh ideas; be encouraged in the joys and challenges of your ministry. We laugh, learn and lift one another up.

This summer, we covered summer ministry possibilities and planning for fall programming, themes, curriculum and equipping leadership.

You're not alone in this work.

Let's do it together.

Upcoming meetings

To receive the meeting link, fill in the form at presbyterian.ca/ccm/christian-education.

Inspired to Inspire

September 29, 2025

Come together for a time of sharing and discovery. In this gathering, we'll discuss the books, articles and other resources that are fuelling our faith and shaping our ministry.

Seasons of Wonder: Planning Advent, Christmas and the Church Year

October 27, 2025

Gather for a session focused on planning meaningful Advent and Christmas experiences. We'll explore how the rhythms of the church year can shape and enrich our worship and programs, offering fresh ideas for engaging all ages.

Rest for the Soul: Caring for Ourselves in Ministry

December 8, 2025

Ministry is a calling—and it can also be deeply demanding. Join us for a time of honest conversation, encouragement and shared wisdom on nurturing our own spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being. Together, we'll explore practices that sustain us, so we can continue to serve with joy and resilience.



To order, visit: presbyterian.ca/merchandise

**PCC
GEAR
IS HERE**

T-shirts
Pins
Hats
Water bottles
...and more

Educational Activities for Presbyterians

View all PCC webinars at presbyterian.ca/leadership-webinars



Presbyterians Go to the Movies

First Film: *The Mission*, Roland Joffe, 1986

Theme: The church from the outside

Viewing tips and access to information will be available September 1. A post-viewing online discussion will take place Wednesday, Sept. 24, at 6:00 p.m. (Eastern). The session leader will be Dr. Lee Johnson.

Sign up to attend at presbyterian.ca/leadership-webinars.

Presbyterians Read

Study text: *The Apocryphal Gospels: A Very Short Introduction*, Paul Foster, Oxford Press, 2009

Theme: Jesus' birth and childhood stories: the well-worn, the weird and the wonderful.

The reading plan and sessions will be available on October 15. Live online lectures and discussion will take place each Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. (Eastern) from Nov. 19 to Dec. 10, led by Dr. Lee Johnson.

Sign up to attend at presbyterian.ca/leadership-webinars.



Dr. Lee Johnson has joined the Life and Mission Agency as education program coordinator. In this role, Lee will create educational resources for ministries in the church and act as a consultant to other departments for educational materials. Among Lee's projects will be resources for Presbyterians Read.

Lee has two bachelor's degrees (in Christian education and elementary education), a master's degree in theology from Moravian Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. She has been a professor of New Testament and of classics at Methodist Theological Seminary and East Carolina University, as well as a lecturer at various seminaries and universities, including Knox College in Toronto.

Lee's primary areas of expertise are in Paul and his letters, women in the biblical world, and interpretive methods and cultural contexts of the Bible. She has also explored the Pauline perspective on the rise of transhumanism and radical life extension in the world. Lee was part of the research and writing team for *The Oxford Handbook of the Synoptic Gospels* as well as the *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Lee has led numerous adult Sunday school classes on topics such as the Corinthian letters, the birth narratives, Jesus as a political agent, and women and the early church. Lee is involved in the Society of Biblical Studies and the Canadian Society of Biblical Scholars.

Lee can be reached at ljohnson@presbyterian.ca.

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

WMS Synodical of Quebec & Eastern Ontario Annual Meeting



Annie Carmichael, Eileen Chambers (with guitar) and Ruth Bond—members of St. Paul's Kemptville Choir.

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

The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) Synodical of Quebec & Eastern Ontario met for its Annual Meeting at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Kemptville, Ont., on April 25. The meeting was attended both in person and virtu-

ally by over 30 members of WMS groups from Lanark & Renfrew, Brockville and Ottawa. The meeting opened with worship, led by the WMS group from Morewood Presbyterian Church.

During the morning business session, attendees reviewed reports from various executive portfolios, updates about synodical finances, and reports of the

work, study and mission taken on by the various constituent groups. Patricia Grainger then led a Bible study that focused on acts of kindness in scripture.

After a delicious lunch and a lively singalong, attendees heard from WMS councillor-at-large, member Diana Kemp, who went with a WMS delegation to Cuba in April to learn more about what the various churches (including the Presbyterian Church in Cuba) are doing to assist Cubans in need. Currently, living conditions for Cubans are worse than even before the 1959 revolution. Cuba is still suffering an economic slump intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of the downturn are magnified by the decades-long imposition of sanctions by the United States.

Diana's talk was followed by an "in memoriam" service led by Peggy Malcolm, of St. Andrew's Kars, to commemorate members of the WMS who are no longer with us.

Executive Director the Rev. Sa-

rah Kim, Past Council President Janet Brewer and current Council President Cathy Reid (online) encouraged the work of the synodical and its members.

The Synodical Executive for 2025 was installed by the Rev. Samer Kandalaft and the Rev. Shahrzad Kandalaft. Catherine Blatch, WMS synodical president, expressed her thanks to those who helped to organize the annual meeting, and to everyone who continues to do the work of WMS. The meeting closed with singing and prayer and lots of enthusiasm for the WMS.



Ruth Pollock, Clerk of Session for Morewood Presbyterian Church.



Commissioning of WMS Synodical officers.

PULPIT VACANCIES

Atlantic Provinces

Alliston, WellSpring
(full-time minister)

Dartmouth, Iona
(part-time minister)

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

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

Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Almonte, Community
(full-time minister)

Beaconsfield, Briarwood
(Full- or part-time minister)

Inverness, PQ (full-time
ecumenical shared ministry)

**Lancaster, St. Andrew's and
Martintown, St. Andrew's**
(full-time minister)

Manotick, Knox
(full-time minister)

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

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

Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Bramalea, St. Paul's
(part-time minister)

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

Grand Valley, Knox
(part-time minister)

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

Markham, Celebration
(full-time minister)

Midland, Knox
(full-time minister)

Toronto, Ghanaian
(contract minister)

Toronto, Ghanaian
(part-time interim minister
consultant)

Toronto, Mimico
(full-time minister)

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

**Toronto (Scarborough),
St. Andrew's** (full-time minister)

Vaughan, Vaughan Community
(full-time youth minister)

Southwestern Ontario

Chatham, First
(full-time minister)

Glencoe (Mosa), Burns
(full-time minister)

Hamilton (Jarvis), Chalmers
(50%-time stated supply
minister)

London, Korean Christian
(part-time children and youth
minister)

**Moore, Knox & Mooretown,
St. Andrew's** (part-time lay
minister)

**Moore, Knox & Mooretown,
St. Andrew's** (part-time minister)

Niagara Falls, Stamford
(full-time minister)

**Presbytery of Essex-Kent –
General Presbyter**
(part-time minister)

St. Thomas, Knox
(full-time lead minister)

Strathroy, Caradoc
(part-time minister)

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

Waterdown, Knox
(full-time lead minister)

Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario

Regina, Norman Kennedy
(full-time minister)

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

DEATH NOTICES

Read full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

**The Rev. James Stuart
Sankey Armour**
Deceased July 12, 2025
Montreal, Que.

The Rev. Peter Szabo
Deceased July 1, 2025
St. Laurent, Que.

The Rev. D. Ross MacDonald
Deceased June 3, 2025
New Glasgow, N.S.

The Rev. Dr. Bruce A. Miles
Deceased May 29, 2025
Winnipeg, Man.

**The Rev. Joseph Edward
Riddell**
Deceased May 29, 2025
Calgary, Alta.

Dolina Grace Adamson
Deceased May 27, 2025
Scotsburn, N.S.

The Rev. Sam A. McLauchlan
Deceased May 27, 2025
Montreal, Que.

The Rev. John J. Hibbs
Deceased May 13, 2025
Dundas, Ont.

Bernice Shih
Deceased May 8, 2025
Saskatoon, Sask.

The Rev. Marion F. Schaffer
Deceased April 26, 2025
Oakville, Ont.

**The Rev. Brenda Jean
Fraser (Weinmaster)**
Deceased April 24, 2025
Winnipeg, Man.

Alberta & the Northwest

**Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod
– General Presbyter**
(part-time minister)

British Columbia

Campbell River, Trinity
(full-time minister)

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

JUST WONDERING...



Submit your questions to connection@presbyterian.ca

I recently moved and now serve as an elder at a new congregation. I was surprised to learn that our congregation doesn't support Presbyterians Sharing. What's the difference between funds sent to support presbytery, synod and our denomination, and do congregations have to support them all?



The Early Childhood Summer Program at Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre in Montreal, Que., is supported by Presbyterians Sharing.

Answered by Karen Plater,
Stewardship

Presbyterians Sharing is the name of the national church fund that supports mission and ministry in Canada and around the world. It's one way that Presbyterian congregations work together to participate in God's mission. Through Presbyterians Sharing, we provide grants for special ministries, camps and struggling congregations. We walk with Indigenous people, seek justice, and serve people who are vulnerable. We help presbyteries start new congregations. We support young people through camps and national events. We help people discern the call to ministry and help people study for ministry at our theological colleges. We produce and provide educational resources, host webinars and events, and support governance and justice work.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a connectional church—that means we have formal ways of connecting our ministries and working together. Every congregation is part of a presbytery; in fact, it is the presbytery, not the congregation, that officially calls and oversees the

ministers who serve our congregations. Some mission and ministry takes place through presbyteries, such as: supporting camps, educational opportunities, and specialized ministries like Evangel Hall or ARISE. Presbyteries belong to synods and congregations may also support mission and ministry, such as summer camps, through their synod. Both the presbytery and the synod issue assessments that outline the ministry and plans how they will be funded. A congregation needs to pay the assessment—it's part of being a Presbyterian congregation.

All congregations who are part of the PCC are also members of the General Assembly. It's through the General Assembly that we decide what projects Presbyterian congregations will support together in the coming year and into the future.

Presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly are called "the courts of the church." That's because the decisions that they make are binding on all congregations. Just like in a democracy, decisions made at the Session, presbytery or synod level can be appealed to the courts. General Assembly has the final say.

Every year, a third of congregations send both an elder and a minister to General Assembly, so a congregation is represented every three years. These commissioners discuss and vote on the budget and direction for how we will continue Christ's ministry together in the world. That budget is funded by the gifts congregations give to Presbyterians Sharing. The reports and recommendations considered at General Assembly are the result of hard work done by the over 220 people who serve on more than 34 committees, subcommittees and working groups reporting to General Assembly. Committees, working groups and staff collaborate to develop educational resources, share information and guidelines,

lead conferences and webinars, provide coaching and mentoring, write letters to governments, reflect theologically and participate in ministry programs.

Now, unlike presbyteries and synods, congregations are encouraged to support Presbyterians Sharing (the General Assembly budget) by accepting an allocation. Every year, they decide how much they can give to support the ministry, depending on their circumstances. General Assembly recommends that all congregations support Presbyterians Sharing with at least 10% of their dollar base. The dollar base is an amount that supports normal church expenses in a year. It's calculated using information from a congregation's statistical report. This dollar base calculation doesn't include mission gifts, large building improvements, new building construction, or debt repayments. The congregation is asked to prayerfully consider how much they can support Presbyterians Sharing each year and report back an accepted allocation—the amount they realistically hope to send.

Some congregations put their accepted allocation in their church budget and guarantee to send it every year. Other congregations encourage members to give designated gifts through their offering, and they send in what is gathered. There are congregations who use either method to meet or exceed their recommended allocation. Many congregations accept a lower amount, for a variety of reasons. If a congregation can't meet their accepted allocation, there are no repercussions. Whatever can be given is gratefully and cheerfully received. There is a lot of grace built into this system. When it was initially set up, people knew that congregations across Canada faced very different circumstances and would have different abilities to contribute to the General Assembly budget—that's why there's

an allocation, which has a certain voluntary aspect, rather than an assessment, which is a bill that must be paid. However, it was intended that ALL congregations would financially support Presbyterians Sharing. It's part of being a connectional church.

Every year, some congregations are unable to support Presbyterians Sharing. Sometimes they've undertaken a big building project that has stretched them more than they expected, or maybe they are going through a time of conflict or difficulty and are overwhelmed by their everyday expenses while trying to faithfully serve their community. Sometimes a major donor of the congregation has died. Some congregations find it challenging to support Presbyterians Sharing if they are in the midst of considering an amalgamation or dissolution. But, from time to time, congregations also write to say that they have decided not to support Presbyterians Sharing because they don't agree with some of the decisions made by General Assembly. Whether or not congregations should be able to try and vote with their money rather than their voting card, or choose to step away because they don't agree with the majority, is an issue we've never discussed, as far as I know. What I do know is that they are missing out on supporting the excellent work we do

together to participate in God's mission, and seeing what God does with our gifts is part of the joy of ministry.

Developing a plan to raise gifts for Presbyterians Sharing doesn't have to be difficult. Some congregations hold Presbyterians Sharing Sundays and send in the offering collected. They sell pies and jam and hold fundraising concerts. They talk about the mission and ministry undertaken through Presbyterians Sharing using Mission Moments (presbyterian.ca/mission-moments). They share short videos in their worship services. At the Stewards by Design conferences, Dr. Kennon Callahan always said "money follows mission." When the mission of Presbyterians Sharing is presented with joy and encouragement, people will respond. Resources for Presbyterians Sharing can be found at presbyterian.ca/sharing.

Presbyterians Sharing is making a difference in people's lives. Every year, the *Connection* newspaper (also supported by gifts to Presbyterians Sharing) dedicates four pages to educate readers on how gifts are used (see the Spring editions), and many of the articles in this newspaper report on ministry supported with gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. If you want a full report of all that Presbyterians Sharing supports, read the Acts & Proceedings at presbyterian.ca/aandp.



Worship at Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church, Mistawasis First Nation, Sask., a ministry supported by Presbyterians Sharing.