



## Seeking God's Will in Nepal



By the Rev. Dr. Glynis Williams,  
Associate Secretary  
International Ministries

Dr. Nicholas and Rebecca Bauman and family have now been in Nepal for 10 months, appointed by International Ministries to work with church partner, United Mission to Nepal (UMN).

The most significant event in the life of this family has been the birth of baby Dorothy "Dot" on July 28, delivered at Tansen Mission Hospital, up in the mountains of western Nepal. Dorothy's birth in Tansen has initiated many wordless conversations

with Nepali friends. Becky writes: "When people learn that Dorothy was born here in their country, their faces fill with surprise and joy and wonder that we chose to be here in their home at such a significant and vulnerable time. Nepali people know well that bringing a child into the world is dangerous business. We are here in the messy business of life right alongside them. We chose to be in this beautiful place to bring our child into the world. I don't have words to match, but faces tell me that it means something. I see that they are proud of their country and want us to love it too."

After two months of language and cultural orientation, Nick Bauman has been working as part of the medical/surgical team at Tansen hospital. There are two other surgeons—one Nepali, and one from the UK—as well as two Nepali surgeons who act as chief residents, and who are also quite skilled. Nick states that in many areas they "surpass my meagre experience," in spite of his nine years as a surgeon. In addition, there are about five other residents at varying levels of training. Nick is not a neophyte in international surgical practices, having had experiences in Kenya, Uganda, Congo and India. In his

application, he quipped that he was anticipating the surgical adventures (and mis-adventures) that might be required of him in Nepal!

Each week Nick spends one or two days in the outpatient clinic, seeing people referred for general surgery. This includes anything surgical apart from orthopaedics. He gets referrals for gynecological, urology, abdominal and anything "soft tissue" related. He has seen kidney stones, urinary retention, hemorrhoids, bowel obstructions, perforated ulcers, the occasional bowel cancer, paediatric and adult hernias, burns and blunt trauma. Not to mention bee bites,

goat trauma, bear bites, but no snake bites yet!

The workload in Nepal poses challenges due to language. Seeing 40 patients with a variety of problems is a full day for many in Canada, but in Nepal Nick is working through translation. Thankfully, Sunil, the MD general practice resident who has been attached to Nick is quite competent, and he writes "between the two of us—we muddle along."

Nick notes an interesting situation from a Canadian perspective, which is the degree to which it is culturally acceptable for random strangers to

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## “I desire to seek God’s will through service.”

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participate in the health encounters of another Nepali patient. On more than one occasion he has realized only halfway through an encounter, that “one of the people in the consulting room is not a family member, nor related, but has been listening intently to the conversation, and offering advice, or relevant questions. No one seems to mind too much...”

Intercultural experiences can at times be challenging. One example concerns patient consent, which in

Canada is based on the autonomy of the person to make an informed decision after receiving all the information possible. In Nepal, Nick’s tentative observations are that the decisions are generally made by the patient’s family, which seems to be valued more highly in the culture than individual autonomy. Functionally, however, this usually means that the consent process occurs with whichever male relative is most easily found. This seems to be true

often whether the patient is male or female, but especially the latter. Certainly on a few occasions, a male family member has shown up at the last moment, and then in front of the female patient, or the mother of the child—the “actual consent” process starts. There are a whole host of issues here of course—not the least being the fact that the male member is also probably the one who will be footing the bill, in a system which is still 99% “private pay.” To function in a way that is respectful of Nepali norms, Nick writes: “I am having to temper some of my Canadian practises: but it is not always immediately obvious to me to what degree I should acquiesce, or instead promote a ‘different’ way of doing





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## Correction Notice

In Issue 3, page 8, the Rev. Glynis Williams was incorrectly listed as the author of “Thanking God for the Ngudradrekai Bible” article. The piece was written by the Rev. Paul McLean.

things, at least in my role here as an educator. My intercultural experience here at times challenges me, and our family, to be willing to bend, without breaking. And sometimes to sweat, as we figure out which is which.”

When originally asked why he was seeking an overseas mission appointment, Nick replied: “I desire to seek God’s will through service. I am in a ‘serving profession,’ but one that in Canada at least, is one of sig-

nificant privilege. Privilege and power are not a state naturally aligned with the Christian story, as followers of Jesus of Nazareth. These circumstances have the ability to blind us to the other, to hold us from seeing the needs of others. I hold out hope for a Christian missions orientation of submissive engagement, of relationship building in which we can with our partners ‘seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly (with God).’”

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# A Message from the General Secretary

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

The Mérode Altarpiece, created in the 1400s in the workshop of Robert Campin, captures the moment just before everything forever changes. The angel Gabriel has so recently arrived in Mary's living room that she hasn't yet noticed the divine messenger and she continues reading undisturbed. Nor does Mary see that the candle illuminating her manuscript has gone out. But she no longer needs it, for a new, more perfect light shines in the darkness.

The Annunciation is usually set in the private interior of a church or a cloistered garden far from public observation. But Campin's Annunciation unfolds in the ordinary surroundings of a contemporary home, a place where any middle-class family might have lived. The location reminds us of something important about the incarnation: the church does not own it and cannot contain it. Christ enters the

world for the sake and salvation of the whole world, not for a few individuals.

The house is filled with the stuff of daily life that serves to remind us of the physicality of the incarnation. The Word becomes flesh and the flesh has real needs. Mary and her child will require food, water, furniture, towels, comfort and shelter because this is a very real life with all the requirements of a vulnerable existence.

The doors and windows in the painting are open, teaching us that with the advent of Christ the boundary between the personal and the public, heaven and earth, the sacred and secular, and between humanity and God has been crossed.

The Holy Spirit is usually depicted in religious art as a dove. But in this painting the Spirit appears as a small figure flying to Mary on seven golden rays. Prophetically, the figure carries a cross, the presence of which, along with the hundreds of nails in the painting, hauntingly connects the moment of Christ's conception with his crucifixion. The Mérode Altarpiece shows us that, in Christ,



birth, life, death and new life all meet.

Another artist, the poet T. S. Eliot, points to the same truth in his evocative Christmas poem. One Sunday morning in 1927, with the aid of half a bottle of Booth's Gin, Eliot wrote a poem entitled *Journey of the Magi*. In the poem Eliot imagines one of the magi reflecting on what he witnessed in Bethlehem: *Were we led all that way for / Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly, / We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death, / But had thought they were different;... / We returned to our places, these Kingdoms, / But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation...*

Like poets and painters, theologians point toward the truth that Christ lovingly saves us from "deadly lives" with a life-giving death. The Welsh Anglican Bishop Rowan Williams writes that Christmas "tells us exactly

what Good Friday and Easter tell us: that God fulfils what he wants to do by emptying himself of his own life, giving away all that he is in love." The purposes of God are achieved "by reckless gift, by cradle and the cross." We are used to thinking of the manger and the tomb as opposites: one a hopeful beginning and the other a painful end. Campin, Eliot and Williams want us to see that both hold the promise of life.

Like Mary sitting in her living room, we read the stories of promise and await not just birth but rebirth: the exhilaration that comes from letting go of old ways and old sorrows and longing for some new dispensation. And like Mary, we sit and ponder the mystery of this love story that always surprises. But soon we will be called to pick up and follow the child into the world God so loved that God risked it all for love.

## LETTERS

Please send comments by email to [communications@presbyterian.ca](mailto:communications@presbyterian.ca) or mail to The Presbyterian Connection, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7

Hi Folks,  
Thank you for another informative and inspiring issue.

One element of the old *Record* that I do miss is the letters section. I found it a great way to hear alternate views and heartfelt responses, to engage in dialogue, and to become more connected

with Presbyterians throughout the country. Any chance this could become a feature of the current publication?

Keep up the good work!  
God bless, Rev. Robert Reid,  
Iona PC, North York, ON  
.....

As a recent graduate of Knox College, I was fortunate to have Dr. Gordon for Introduction to New Testament and Introduction to Preaching. I have to agree with Ian Ross-McDonald on his article in Connections Fall 2017. I

was always amazed by Dr. Gordon's energy, enthusiasm and teaching.

Dr. Gordon, besides being Principal of Knox College, was very kind and understanding when one needed it, her door was open to those who required extra help or encouragement.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada needs to listen to Dr. Gordon's words that "leaders should be bifocal: One eye has to be on the immediate tasks and responsibilities while the other eye focuses on the distant

horizon that is open to the mystery that belongs to God."

We live in a complicated world and it seems that we would do well to keep our eyes focused on present tasks and responsibilities as well as toward God's Mystery in the horizon. We should turn our hearts to a positive outlook for the PCC rather than constantly complaining about congregational numbers going up or down.

Jesus did not count how many people followed him; Jesus concentrated on the tasks and responsibilities at hand then pointed people towards God's "new heaven and new earth."

Barbara Smibert, Central Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, ON  
.....

I've enjoyed the first two issues of *Presbyterian Connection* but this third issue is just SO GOOD I had to write and tell you so. It was cover-to-cover reading with every article of interest. I appreciated the brevity, organization and variety of it all. There was refreshing news from Zander Dunn, historical news on the E.H. Johnson Award, mission news from Taiwan, encouraging news on the PCC relationship with our Catholic brethren, thought-provoking ideas about mission trips, lots of photos... and on and on. It was all good and every Presbyterian should be reading it!

Joan Cho, Atlantic Mission Society



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**Barb Summers:** Editor

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# Presbyterians Sharing—Ministry Broad and Deep



By Karen Plater, Associate Secretary,  
Stewardship and Planned Giving

"Blessed are those who have not  
seen and yet have come to believe."  
John 20:29b

Every year, people—from youth in their teens to active seniors (the oldest so far has been 90)—visit PCC partners on mission trips. It's a journey of learning, sharing and building relationships, as the groups partake in a variety of activities designed to support the partners' long-term mission work. This year Presbyterians have ventured to Ghana, Israel/Palestine, Guatemala, Hungary, and visited Indigenous ministries in central and western Canada. A group is preparing to go to Malawi this spring. (The deadline to apply is Dec. 1, if you are interested!) Again and again we hear how seeing the work in person helps make it come alive in many different ways.

In this issue, you can read about Laura Ingle's journey to Ghana

through Youth in Mission this past summer. She shares her transformation, particularly how she sees *Presbyterians Sharing* and PWS&D in a new light.

While only a handful of people actually get to visit our PCC partners, in the 20 years that I've worked for the PCC I've been astounded by those who continue to faithfully give without ever having seen first-hand the impact of their gifts. They may read stories—some in these very pages (watch for the *Presbyterians Sharing* stamp)—or hear a talk at their congregation, but it's only a sliver of what the church is doing. And yet every year the gifts flow in—a true testimony to the generosity and faithfulness of Presbyterians across Canada. What overflowing abundance!

There's also a lot happening behind the scenes to support congregations and our collective ministry—lesser known, but no less important. Ministry & Church Vocations guidance conference encourages, equips and helps candidates

for ministry discern their calling. Letters have been written and sent to government officials, encouraging them to keep their promise that Indigenous people on reserves will have access to clean and safe water. Webinars have been launched to help equip congregational leaders in leadership and stewardship skills—check them out at [presbyterian.ca/webinar-wednesday](http://presbyterian.ca/webinar-wednesday).

The PCC's ministry is broad and deep. As churches around the world celebrate 500 years of reforming and being reformed, it is an exciting time to be part of this ministry.

**Watch for the stamps throughout this issue to see some of the ministry supported in Canada and around the world through your gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. Learn more about mission opportunities at [presbyterian.ca/experiencemission](http://presbyterian.ca/experiencemission)**

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## FEATURE

# Churches Get Messy to Share the Good News



There was a strong Presbyterian presence at the first national Messy Church conference in Canada, held at Wycliffe College in Toronto, Oct. 26-27. We learned many things about getting messy for the sake of making disciples. In this photo, we are practising how to use emotion—this one is surprise!—in biblical storytelling.

By Emily Hill, Education Program Coordinator, Canadian Ministries

Imagine walking into the sanctuary of your church and seeing children running around, tables filled with colourful crafts, and plates full of spaghetti. Some people looking on this scene would think that something had gone

terribly wrong. But, for a growing number of churches, this is a form of worship.

The Messy Church movement, which started in England and has been growing across the world over the last decade, invites people to experience God through hospitality, creativity, celebration and inter-gen-

erational connection. Typically, congregations that hold Messy Churches meet once a month for a shared meal, fun and messy activities, biblical storytelling, prayer and praise.

The “messy” way of “doing” church creates an atmosphere where today’s families can be comfortable exploring faith and Christian com-

munity life. Many congregations, including several in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, are successfully sharing the good news of Jesus with their neighbours, friends and community members through Messy Church.

*If your congregation is interested*

*in starting a Messy Church, please visit the Messy Church website to explore the resources that are available: [messychurch.org.uk](http://messychurch.org.uk). We also invite you to contact Canadian Ministries for more information about Messy Churches in The Presbyterian Church in Canada at [canadianministries@presbyterian.ca](mailto:canadianministries@presbyterian.ca)*

## MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

# Drawn Together to Worship the Newborn King

By the Rev. Peter Bush, Moderator of the 143rd General Assembly

Advent and Christmas are not complete at our house until the bamboo nativity set has been brought out and put on top of the bookcase in the living room (some years it has found its way to the communion table at Westwood Church). The nativity set, featuring Taiwanese figures, was made in Taiwan and has been in my wife’s family for many years.

In Advent, I look forward to visiting the Ten Thousand Villages store in Winnipeg. I know I should be shopping for gifts for various people, but it is the nativity sets from around the world that attract my attention. Palestinian figures share shelves with Congolese holy families carved from ebony. The sets are built on raised platforms resting on stilts with animals positioned below.

The stables come in a variety of

designs, reflecting the artist’s personal experiences, tastes and surroundings. The artists are theologically correct—for at Christmas we remember that in Jesus Christ God became human and lived among us. This is the mystery of the incarnation. That God became one of us; having a face like ours, a human face. God became one of us, to quote singer Joan Osborne in the song written by Eric Brazilian, “just a slob like one of us,” fully identifying with his people.

Whatever our ethnic background, whatever our cultural roots, whatever our language, God has come to be with us in Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of the word *Emmanuel*. No people, no cultural identity is outside hearing and responding to the call to come and worship the newborn King. Part of making the incarnation real for people is assisting them to be able hear the story, read the story, of God’s gift in their mother tongue.

The work of Bible translation affirms God’s love has come to people of every language and ethnicity.

The community of people drawn to worship the newborn King is multi-ethnic. Together, whatever our ethnicity, whatever our cultural commitments, we have been drawn to worship the newborn King. Jesus is, as the Christmas carols trumpet, King of kings and Lord of lords. Our loyalty to Jesus is greater than our loyalty to our culture, our ethnicity, or other markers of our identity—for the number one thing about those who declare Jesus is Lord is that they are people who worship and serve Jesus Christ.

This Advent and Christmas, we remember we are citizens of a new kingdom made up of people of every tribe and language and ethnicity and culture, made up of all of those whose first loyalty is to Jesus, the newborn King, whose reign will never end.



South American nativity scene.



# Making the Camino Pilgrimage

By the Rev. Dr. Richard Fee,  
Toronto, ON

The Camino pilgrimage route is connected to the life and death of St. James, brother of Jesus. He is buried in the Cathedral in Santiago, Spain. Hence the pilgrimage. The Portuguese route follows the original Roman road, Via XIX. History seeps into the souls of your shoes with every step. Articles can drone on about what to wear, what to eat, where to sleep, what to carry. Logistics aside, walking “The Way” is sport, recreation, historical study, a challenge and a spiritual exercise.

The route passes through military zones, industrial complexes, a seemingly abandoned Olympic village, parched landscapes, strip logging forests, endless abandoned factories, dark satanic mills of cement

factories and plastic molding plants. In the midst of parched agricultural land, gleaners in the fields were collecting, not the crop from a field’s edges, but rolls of wasted plastic irrigation tubing.

The words *grim* and *industrial wastelands* came to mind and slipped into conversation often. Admittedly, there is physical discomfort: merciless flies, dust and sheer physical exhaustion after some 37 km days of steep climbing. I also noted threats that the pilgrims (*peregrinos*) of the 13th century did not have to face. Much of the Portuguese Camino is along asphalt secondary roads and, at times, expressways with narrow shoulders. One is vigilant and extremely careful on such motorways.

Those are certainly factors of the Camino. But then, when almost despairing of the dust, pesky flies, heat

and exhaustion, slivers of beauty pierce the day. Factory and field workers coming to our table or calling across the room, recommending several items from an amazing menu of farm fresh fare; orchards of pomegranates, bamboo, olives, apples, lemon and orange; eucalyptus and cork forests offering shade; an entire afternoon hiking through charming woodlands, beside crystal-clear mountain streams; vineyards being harvested and the workers offering us grapes by the handful; shared evening meals in *alburges* or *residential*s with pilgrims from every corner of the world; walking into humble wayside churches and into gilded and spectacular houses of worship that have been in constant use, some since the 1200s; kilometers of intricately designed cobblestone roadways. An overarching sentiment is



that one does experience heightened senses as one walks, step by step for 500 kilometers.

Reflecting now, upon my return to Canada, this Portuguese Camino draws a “peregrino” through experiences that are reflective of the entirety of life—the glorious, beautiful, the amazing, the upsetting, the anxiety-producing, ugly and destroyed. It is

spiritual. It presents an entire country of warm, welcoming and hospitable people. It does not hide the ugly underbelly of modern problems and concerns. It exposes the seeker to the historical pathways of saints and ordinary folk and the sweep of human folly, greed and war. It is all there to be seen and experienced, one step at a time.

## DIACONAL MINISTRIES

# What’s Up with Diaconal Work?

By the Rev. Joyce Davis, diaconal and ordained, ministered in Japan, Toronto and Vancouver and is now retired in Vancouver

I’ve heard people say that diaconal ministry in the PCC is dead in the water. Given the virtual disappearance of formally recognized Diaconal Ministry positions in our congregations and presbyteries, one could easily draw that conclusion. But let me tell you that diaconal ministry in its broadest and best sense is alive and well in our church. In fact, while you might not recognize these “ministers” as such, you see them every week in your congregation. You might even be one yourself. They are often the unheralded, hard-working, humble, collegial servants in the church who go about the business of serving the needs of people, groups and programs—needs that would otherwise go unmet without these folk who serve in the spirit of diaconal ministry. These are the unofficial “diaconal ministers.” Diaconal ministers are called and designated to serve in a broad range of ministries within the church, including Christian education, pastoral care and social

ministries.

But there are also officially designated folk who are Members of the Order of Diaconal Ministries (ODM). Some of us have also been ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.

We are involved in a great variety of ministries, but the key distinctive that makes us “diaconal” is the emphasis on collegiality, servanthood and working in a non-hierarchical “from the bottom up” kind of ministry. This is not to say that other ministers are not true servants in the church. It is just to say that we place special emphasis on humble, compassionate service that meets particular needs, with the goal of empowering all Christ’s followers to develop their gifts in ministry. Paul describes this in Ephesians 4:12 as “equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

The ODM held its Biennial Council Meeting at Crieff Hills Community on October 1–3. We gathered to learn, encourage and support each other in our servant ministries across Canada and around the world. Our theme was “Joy in Word and Service.”

There were two highlights in our



meeting. The first was the opportunity to dialogue with four presenters. They were Carraugh Erhardt, Healing and Reconciliation Program Assistant, Justice Ministries; Michelle Ball, Refugee Program Assistant, Presbyterian World Service & Development; Karen Harding, Parish Nurse, Duff Presbyterian Church; and Dr. Tori Smit, Regional Minister of Faith Formation, Synod of CNO&B. Some of our ODM members have experience working in each of those ministries and the mutual interaction in our small groups was stimulating.

The second highlight emerged as excitement built during discussion of our future. We recognized that many leaders in our church are actually

doing ministry which, in essence is diaconal, but unrecognized as such. As a result they are often working “solo” without collegial and prayer support from others with a similar sense of call.

Instead of delaying to debate official qualifications of membership in the ODM, we decided to reach out in support of their ministries in an unofficial way. We will host an event in 2019 to which anyone will be invited who is working in a specialized ministry, or seeking to minister in a diaconal manner. We have wanted to link arms in ministry with others outside the Order for many years. At last we have found “a way out of the box” to do it. We pray that others will



recognize this opportunity and that all our ministries will be strengthened and blessed by working together.

**The next Women’s Gathering will take place in 2020. Visit [womensgathering.ca](http://womensgathering.ca) to learn more**



# MERRY CHRISTMAS from your friends at The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Wishing you a season filled with the hope, peace, joy and love of Christ

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

John 3:16



## Bringing Tidings of Good News

By Barb Summers,  
Editor and Associate Secretary,  
Communications Office

The *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper was launched in early 2017, thanks to support from *Presbyterians Sharing*. We wanted to create a publication that would be uplifting, inspiring, informative and help unite Presbyterians across the country. The first issue went out, and we waited. The response was swift and overwhelmingly positive.

Since the first issue went out, we've run three more editions and we print over 16,300 copies of each issue—distributed to individuals, congregations and groups across the country. We continue to receive feedback that the newspaper offers an effective means of connection between Presbyterians, sharing the news, stories and events taking place across the denomination.

The *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper is free of charge and we intend to keep it that way. However, it does mean we rely on the generous donations of our readers to help ensure we can keep the newspaper running.

Thank you to those who have already sent in thoughtful gifts of \$15, \$20, \$50 and even \$200. These donations ensure we can continue to reach Presbyterians across the country with the good news of the mission and ministry of the PCC.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful Christmas!

Wow, I am so excited about this first issue of the *Presbyterian Connection*

that I am writing to you to express my support and gratitude. I am already impressed with the variety and quality of the articles. I see them as inspirational and provocative springboards to many new conversations. I will definitely be encouraging my congregation to subscribe to, and to actually read, this important newspaper.

—Donna W.

I am impressed at the amount of work and thought that has gone into the newspaper. This will go a long way to helping fill the need for communication. I especially appreciate it as I am not in a church right now and am trying to gear up looking for one.

—Valerie D.

I am delighted—thrilled—that there is a Canadian Presbyterian newspaper now available! Everyone to whom I have spoken seems very pleased that there is once again an official “voice” for the national church.

—Donna D.

Congratulations on your first edition of the *Presbyterian Connection*. It's really good to have a national Presbyterian publication in Canada again! Looking forward to reading more.

—Brad W.

What a delightful surprise to find in yesterday's mail a copy of the *Presbyterian Connection* inaugural edition!

I immediately started reading it and soon sensed its fresh, unassuming, enlightened and efficient approach to reporting news about the PCC. The format and layout, the selection of topics/

stories and general coverage—e.g., on the role of the Assembly Moderator, on overseas missions, on reconciliation and residential schooling, on interviews, etc.—all very promising.

Congratulations and good luck to the Editor, the General Secretary and all those involved in the production of this newspaper.

I look forward to the next quarterly edition.

—Douglas S.

Thank you very much for the spring copy of *Presbyterian Connection*. I am always interested in “things Presbyterian” and look forward to reading

it through entirely. I am a retired elder, age 95, not able to attend worship, except for two services for older folk. Thank you again for this issue.

—Jeanne K.

I want to congratulate you and your team for putting together the *Presbyterian Connection*. It is a great publication and full of helpful information. I appreciate the fact that the Life and Mission Agency has picked up on the importance of communicating to people in the church through the newspaper. Thank you again for all your hard work. It was well worth reading.

—Katherine A.

My sister-in-law received your inaugural edition of the *Presbyterian Connection* and was delighted. Thank you so much! She is in a nursing home and doing very well. The church is a very major part of her life, so your publication is a link to her many friends.

—Judy M.

So many wonderful articles and pictures!

—Maureen W.

I enjoy reading the paper and have seen two articles on churches I have a connection to. Great job!

—Karen T.

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## HISTORY

# The Reformation and the PCC: For Today and Tomorrow



By Mark Godin, a PCC minister currently serving in England in the United Reformed Church

Five hundred years ago in Europe, protesters demonstrating against flaws in the church and perceived errors in theology set in motion events which would greatly change the shape of Christianity not only in that continent but also wherever colonists from there went. Although much has changed over the centuries, the roots of The Presbyterian Church in Canada have grown from that Reformation, and our theology has been formed by the concerns of those days: a desire to listen for the Holy Spirit speaking through the Bible and showing us the way of Christ; a call for discipleship and the mission of pointing the way to God's kingdom to be the concern of all members of churches; humility and awareness to realise that we do not always get theology right, and thus should be open to change in order to follow the way of love and peace more closely.

But five hundred years is a long time, and the history of the churches after the Reformation has not always reflected God's grace. The Reformation brought schism and often violence. Protestants have been both

martyrs and persecutors, at times providing the theological justification for state violence. Martin Luther himself spoke of God's grace and the freedom of a Christian, but also penned some of the vilest anti-Judaism in Christian history.

As we go into the next five hundred years of the Reformation, we carry this legacy of both good and bad. What does that mean for us in The Presbyterian Church in Canada now? We have learned in recent years that we must face the wrongs of our past if we ever hope to be part of God's plans for a better future, no matter how difficult. Where do we go from here, and what can we lift up to help us find our way?

To help all of us reflect on these questions, on behalf of the Committee on Church Doctrine I have asked a selection of people across the Church to answer this question with one hundred words: *From your point of view, what does the 16th-century European Reformation mean for the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in the 21st century and in the years to come?*

Here are their answers. Now, what would you say?

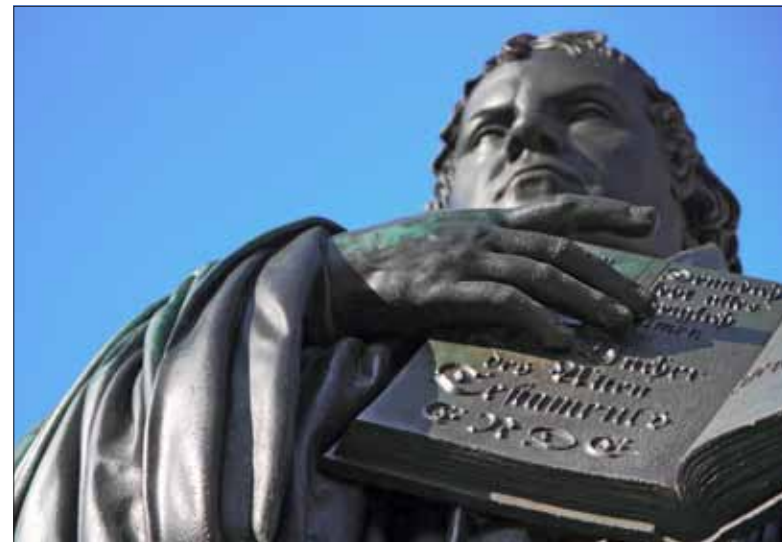
**Richard Topping**, Principal of Van-

couver School of Theology and Professor of Studies in the Reformed Tradition

"The Reformers instruct us in biblical interpretation for the life of God's people now. They understood the Bible as 'the manger in which Christ is laid' and regarded Him as 'the target' at which the whole of the Bible aims. Jesus Christ is Lord and so they read the Bible to find what promotes Him. Trained in the best scholarship, they understand interpretation primarily as a spiritual act. Scripture is 'holy' because the same Spirit who inspired the apostles and prophets becomes our 'inner teacher,' binding our lives to Christ. Scripture interpretation proceeds with the prayer: 'Come Holy Spirit.' Amen."

**The Rev. Peter Bush**, Moderator of the 143rd General Assembly

"The Reformation teaches us to be humble regarding present-day theological statements and understanding. The 17th century Dutch theologian Jodocus van Lodenstein wrote: 'The church is reformed and always [in need of] being reformed according to the Word of God.' For the reformers, the church and church members have not yet become what they are called to be as Christ's peo-



ple. The reformers would invite us to allow our lives and understanding to be constantly shaped by the Holy Spirit speaking through the Bible, the Word of God."

**Sarah Kim**, Executive Director, Women's Missionary Society

"I am thankful to Martin Luther and other reformists who had the foresight to change. Without change, women in the church would not be where they are today—they would not have the privilege of ordination nor would they be able to serve the church without restrictions and with a voice. From that end, Reformation should be celebrated for the freedom and empowerment which was made possible because a few 'good' men started to give voice to the rights of the common people and spoke up against the status quo. That is what mission is about—empowering God's people so that all can be free. That should be the vision of the universal church, whether Protestant or Catholic. When this happens, all

God's people, not just women, will be at liberty to reach the full diversity that was and is meant to be."

**Amanda Currie**, Convener, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

"As an ecumenist, my perspective on the Reformation is deeply influenced by Jesus' prayer 'that all may be one so that the world may believe.' While I give thanks for the reforms of the 16th century that shaped Presbyterian Churches, I cannot forget that the church divided when we failed to reform together. Five hundred years later, we are still trying to heal those divisions, and now we are struggling to maintain unity in our denomination too. Unity does not mean uniformity! I am praying for one universal church, united in Christ, and enriched by great diversity (including the gifts of Reformed Churches). And I am praying for a PCC that stays together despite differences, making space for diversity of perspective and practice. May we be one so that the world will believe."

## The Reformation and Indigenous Faith



By Margaret Mullin, Executive Director, Winnipeg Inner-City Mission

I am Ojibway and I am Irish/Scottish. I am an ordained minister of word and sacrament and I am Anishinabe Kwe. I am fully Christian and I am also fully Indigenous. I operate well within two completely different world views.

I am wading into this conversation because I am 64 years old

and I have witnessed the harm and the healing that the 5 Solas of the reformation can bring to individuals, families, communities and Nations: unnecessary harm and much needed healing.

For the past 20 years I have ministered with Indigenous people who are living in deep poverty in the city core—deep generational poverty caused by both government and Church.

During and before this calling I was and have been active in God's work of giving back the Spirit of the Indigenous people. I use the term giving back because our Spirit was stolen from us by the forces of colonization and the Indian Residential Schools. Our Indigenous Spirit was stolen by government and Church.

The Reformation saw clearly that Christian life had to be theocentric (centred on God). I believe that wholeheartedly. What I do not understand is why my Indigenous spiritual beliefs, which are theocentric, were and are not considered valid and valuable by the Church.

The Reformation saw clearly that if I am saved it is by God's grace alone. I believe that wholeheartedly. What I do not understand, in a multicultural world, is by whose definition of God and God's grace

are we operating under?

The Reformation saw clearly that there is no circumstance in life that scripture cannot or will not speak to. It is the sure and sole authority of God. I wholeheartedly believe that. What I do not understand is why the original settlers of this land could not take the time to evaluate the Indigenous beliefs through the lens of scripture, and through the eyes of Jesus.

The Reformation saw clearly that only Christ has the authority to reconcile us to God. I wholeheartedly believe that. I believe that the only reconciler, Jesus Christ, makes it possible for all to find forgiveness and reconciliation with God. What I do not understand, in a world where there is so much indifference, is who, but God alone, decides who Jesus alone reconciles?

The Reformation saw clearly that when all else is stripped away all we have is faith that God will hold us. Faith in the One and only God who hears the cries of our hearts and will be with us. I wholeheartedly believe that. What I don't understand is why my Indigenous faith in the One God, Creator, has never been validated or valued by the Church.

From my world view and from my perspective I just don't get it. But, from the European world view and the perspective of Christian Doctrine committees I am still navigating in very muddy waters. All I can say is come into the water with us, where the Holy Spirit makes the water flow clear and bright.

Thank you for listening. All my relations.



## HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

# A Walk to Remember



*By Mary Jesse, Mission and Outreach Committee, First Presbyterian Church in Regina, SK*

On a hot, windy day in July, a large group of people walked together down a dusty, gravel road to honour the lives of children lost at the Regina Indian Industrial School (RIIS). A diverse group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people—children and adults, elders and chiefs, church members, government officials and police officers—spent the afternoon walking, praying, remembering and feasting.

About 100 people gathered on the outskirts of Regina to walk the 1 km distance to the cemetery site. The occasion was the fourth and final Memorial Walk and Feast for the children buried at the school cemetery. Among the walkers were several members of First Presbyterian Church, Regina, and the Rev. Peter Bush, Moderator of the 143rd General Assembly.

“The children are lonely. We are here to feed them and remember them,” said Elder Noel Starblanket as he began prayers at the cemetery site.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada operated the Regina Indi-

an Industrial School from 1891 to 1910, when it closed. At least 500 children from more than 40 Indigenous communities across Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta attended the school. Though the school was originally intended for older children and teens, given its emphasis on teaching trades and domestic skills, the admission register records students as young as three years of age. The school and its outbuildings are gone. All that remains is the cemetery with 35 to 40 burials.

In 2013, First Church, Regina, was invited to join other community members to help protect and commemorate the cemetery site. A working group was formed to conduct historical research, contact affected Indigenous communities, and share the story of the school and cemetery with schools, churches, community organizations and government officials. The RIIS Commemorative Association, an Indigenous-led body, now leads the work of protecting and commemorating the site. Churches continue to be active in the Association.

In 2016, the cemetery was declared a Municipal Heritage Site and in 2017, Provincial Heritage status

was obtained. This is the only cemetery in Saskatchewan that, to date, has received Provincial Heritage status. The Association has several more goals ahead, including the creation of a ceremonial space adjacent to the cemetery, a permanent marker to recognize the site, and long-term maintenance and upkeep.

Each Annual Walk has grown in size and in spirit. This year’s Walk and Feast was the first occasion that a church representative spoke publicly. It was important to hear our moderator express deep regret and sorrow for our denomination’s role in this school and the residential school system. It was heartening to share the many expressions of hope and shared purpose to heal from a divided past, and to move forward together in a better way.

One First Church participant put it this way, “For me, the RIIS walk was a test of reconciliation: individuals actively demonstrating their shared commitment going forward while acknowledging, at the same time, the horrible injustices imposed upon innocent children. As a parent, I ask, ‘Could any loss be more devastating?’ The RIIS walk was a powerful symbol of the pathway to reconciliation.”



Memorial Walk for children buried at the Regina Indian Industrial School cemetery.



James Keepness, Jessie Keepness, Jimmie Keepness, Thomas Notawasquitaway, Tommy Notawasquitaway, 1904. PHOTO CREDIT: SASKATOON ARCHIVES COLLECTION R-B990



Two Horns, wife, and family with two children of staff; school in background. 1905. PHOTO CREDIT: SASKATOON ARCHIVES COLLECTION R-A2690

## Local Leaders’ National Reconciliation Gathering



*By David Phillips, Clerk of Session, St. Andrew’s-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, ON*

September 15–17, 2017, were important dates for healing and reconciliation within The Presbyterian Church in Canada as 38 local leaders from across Canada gathered at the Manresa Jesuit Spiritual Renewal Centre in Pickering, Ont., for a time of fellowship and sharing about the church’s healing and reconciliation journey.

### About the participants

Jake Charles is a member of the Chipewas of Georgina Island First Nation. Jake opened and closed our proceedings through ceremonial drumming and his words to us about the importance of Indigenous traditions. Jake welcomed us to the land and led us in a smudging ceremony to set us on a course to consider the past, present and future.

Dave Mowat is a member of Alleville First Nation. Dave gave an overview of the land and pointed out that we are all treaty people and that British, French and American history



is part of Indigenous history. Land ownership and its use can be controversial and lead to disagreement and court cases. Moving forward is not easy but we must move forward and look at mutual accountability, safety and consider past harms. We must consider that at times we need to take a harder look at society and break it down to build a better future.

Ry Moran is a member of the Métis Nation and the director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. He said we must walk beside Indigenous people and listen, for they are telling a story. That story is about residential schools, deconstructed families, land, resources and traditions. As we hear the stories, we must not let the gap

expand between non-Indigenous people and Indigenous people. We must respect mutual accountability and safety, always keeping in mind past harms.

Marlene Brant Castellano is a Mohawk of the Bay of Quinte and a Professor Emeritus at Trent University. Marlene told us that we need to have more than intentions and that reconciliation is a journey. She presented us with two circle metaphors. The first was “Everything is Related.” These concentric circles start with the individual in the centre then radiate out to the family, to the community, to the nation and then to the natural world. Each ring of the circle affects the next ring, in either directions. Her

other graphic of circles was “The Components of Reconciliation.” It starts with acknowledgement in the centre. We must acknowledge what has happened, then redress what was lost and/or compensate for harm. The third circle is healing, which is present in all of these components. Finally, we must reconcile and realize the importance of forgiveness.

### About the event

We were divided into groups. An important task for each group was to look at an initiative that each of us could undertake in the coming year, how we could stay in contact and eventually settle on one thing the PCC should prioritize related to reconciliation. There were many different points that came from each of the six groups. Some of the initiatives that were suggested: inform and educate your presbytery; work with a local Reservation or Indigenous centre; engage the school systems; celebrate Orange Shirt Day and National Indigenous Peoples Day; increase communication between existing partners and ongoing sharing and listening circles.

We can stay in contact through social media, prayer partnerships and prayer pals. We can get together in local areas to discuss important issues. We must call out racism and speak out as a group where we see injustice. It is important that we keep our feet in the fire. The national church should promote the reading of the confession and the study of the Calls to Action and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as many more thoughts and ideas.

When asked what they wanted to tell their church community about the Gathering, someone shared that they were “so pleasantly surprised to have found a new community of caring people who are sincere in their efforts to accomplish healing and reconciliation with First Nations people.”

To walk this path of reconciliation with one another and with God our Creator is a blessing. For this, we are grateful.

**Learn about the PCC’s reconciliation journey and how you can get involved at [presbyterian.ca/healing](http://presbyterian.ca/healing)**



## MISSION

# Building Relationships in Ghana



By Laura Ingle, YIM Participant and member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket, ON

I have been back from Ghana since May 18th, and am still feeling the impact of the trip. I bring up my experiences as often as I can with friends and family but it is difficult for them to identify with what I witnessed.

Ghana is a beautiful country and I was moved by the amazing people I met there. Esther, from the Presbyterian Church in Ghana's national office, accompanied us on our trip. In a country where men are predominantly leaders, Esther is a strong career woman with a family. She is filled with the Holy Spirit and it was inspiring to be around her. All the people we met who work for PCC partners were very welcoming; it was so clear to me that they truly are doing God's work. Even our driver, Kwami, was incredibly special, making me feel safe in such a foreign place.

It's interesting to write this after I've been back for so long. What affected me most? Was it the Presbyterian Community Based Rehabilitation Centre, which helps people with disabilities discover their abilities? Was it the Gambaga Go Home project, which helps women accused of witchcraft? Both programs, supported by Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D), was extremely powerful to see and the stories of the people we are helping will stay with me forever.

I knew that programs supported by PWS&D would impact me, but I had little appreciation for the work of Presbyterians Sharing. For example, I felt that money should not be spent on higher



Back row (L to R): Kathleen MacIsaac, Sarah Maier, Rachel Lindsay, Esther Ama Wirekoa (PCG), Laura Ingle, the Rev. Laura Duggan, Meaghan Cromie, Darrell Gilkes, Samson Laar (Gambaga Coordinator). Front row: Gambaga Go Home Project participants.

education, when we could be using it to build wells and help feed people. But after visiting three lay training centres and an accredited university, I realized how important these institutions are. While it is necessary to help provide people with the basic necessities of life, it is equally important to help them grow intellectually and spiritually.

The lay training centres we support teach people to become leaders within their congregations, which is really important in a place where many churches do not have ministers. They also teach skills in agriculture and business to help people provide for their families.

In particular, the Akrofi-Christaller Institute had a monumental impact on

me. This university's two masters and doctoral degree programs allow students to research their faith and history in an African context. Presbyterians Sharing contributed substantially to the building of a state-of-the-art library and archives. Initially, my skeptical self wondered why a library like this would be necessary, but after my time there I can answer: it allows people to preserve their history. A library can accommodate students researching their theses, and this research both furthers their culture and presents that culture to the world. Having an international university like the Akrofi-Christaller Institute also puts Ghana on the map and brings in revenue for the country. I am

so grateful to have had the opportunity see these places and to be given the chance to change my mind.

Since returning home, I have often been asked: "But what did you actually do there?" It was a tough question for me to answer at first. What did we accomplish? How did we contribute? After all, isn't that why people go to developing countries—to build something, a church, or a school? But now I realize what we did was build relationships. The amazing thing about our partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Ghana is that it is just that—a partnership. We ask them what they need, and how we can support them, rather than telling them what we think they need.



So why was it important for a group of youth to see the work they are doing? We are now able to share our experiences and are inspired to continue to build those relationships.

Each year at my church's Vacation Bible School we organize a mission moment and raise money for a mission. This year I was able to assist our minister and speak to the congregation about Ghana. It was great to share my experiences, and the congregation seemed more interested and paying more attention than in previous years. I think having someone tell people firsthand about how their gifts are helping made them want to listen harder, learn more and give generously.

I can now speak about the wonderful work the Presbyterian Church in Canada is doing through Presbyterians Sharing and PWS&D because I have seen it in action. Now when I check the box on the donation envelope for missions, I know where that money is going and I can fully support it.

Taking the trip to Ghana was a privilege. I met amazing people who will inspire me for the rest of my life. I learned about a culture I previously had no connection to, and I have come home with a new outlook on life. I went looking forward to helping develop a country, I left with the realization that they are already developed, and with our generosity, they can continue to thrive.

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## YOUTH

# CY I Keep Coming Back



By Chad Bolton, Recreation Leader  
on CY 2018 Planning Team,  
from Charlottetown, PEI

My first experience with Canada Youth (CY) came in 2014, serving as a small-group leader. I was immediately struck by the focus on strong programming, which was used as a means to foster and strengthen relationships between all the participants. The programming was built on the appreciation of a theology of play.

In every aspect of CY programming, I sensed intentionality, which demonstrated deep thought about why we did the things we did. Further, the safety

and well being of all participants was always a top priority. As an adult, I was impressed with the quality of care provided to all.

CY worship was refreshing, innovative and used a wide variety of music styles. It engaged all the senses and was true to the best traditions of our church.

Finally, I found CY's best asset to be an intangible one; it provided hope. Hope for the denomination. Hope for the church. CY reinforces the corporate dimension of faith and faith communities that are sometimes passed over for more isolated religious experiences. This remains one of the primary reasons I keep returning to CY—it gives me hope, it renews my faith, it revitalizes my spirituality and ecclesiology.

**Join me at CY2018, July 2–7 at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont., and discover for yourself this amazing, life-changing event!**



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## INTERVIEW

# Profile in Leadership: Dale Woods

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

After nearly 14 years as the minister at First Presbyterian Church in Brandon, Man., the Rev. Dr. Dale Woods became the Director of Pastoral Studies at The Presbyterian College, Montreal, in 2008. Dale became Acting Principal of the College in 2014 and was appointed by the General Assembly as Principal in 2015.

At the College, Dale is a much-loved teacher of worship and congregational leadership. With a strong interest in, and talent for, congregational change and revitalization, the thesis he wrote for his Doctor of Ministry degree focused on the role of elders in congregational change. Throughout the church, Dale is deeply appreciated for his wisdom and graciousness. He is a popular and helpful group facilitator and sought after as

a speaker on leadership, renewal and spirituality.

In conversation, the first thing one notices about Dale is that he is funny. Very funny. Dale doesn't say that humour is an essential feature of leadership but his self-deprecating style and liberal use of humour—and the humility that accompanies it—is vital. His listeners also quickly become aware of how skilful he is with insightful theological reflection. But what are some of the essential components of strong leadership that Dale articulates?

Dale thinks much about the role and importance of listening as the basis of strong leadership. He notes that in the church we are good at talking but not as good at listening, perhaps because listening isn't considered very productive. Pointing to various examples in the Bible, Dale advocates spending considerable time in prayer and listening to God as essential to strengthening leaders for the task of faithful ministry, especially in complex times



like ours.

Learning is another key discipline. "Without continued learning people often feel depleted." He means, of course, the stimulation and benefit that comes from reading widely and being a lifelong learner and the benefits of pursuing further education. But Dale also means the insight that comes from becoming more self-aware and working out what one's gifts and passions for ministry might be. Leaders who know who they are and what excites them make more effective leaders. "People are looking for a passion with which to engage their lives. Nobody wants to have a meaningless life and nobody wants to be attached to a ministry that isn't meaningful. The leader's task is to help people grasp vision and to plug into it."

Invoking Alan Kreider's book *The*

*Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* Dale names two other attributes that leaders and the church should attend to. The first is patience. Kreider proposes the early church survived and grew, not through a coordinated effort of evangelism, but because it nurtured patience as an essential Christian virtue. For the early church, patience meant trusting God, who was decisively at work in the world, and obeying Christ, who called his followers to persevere. And secondly, Kreider claims that growth of the early church came as a result of an emphasis on intentionally living out faith in incarnational ways that attracted people to communities that focused on hospitality, prayer, education and worship. Dale proposes that leaders today ask "What does it mean for me to be more incarnational in my faith?" And there are implications for congregations as well, Dale notes: "The church asks how it can change the culture or get more people; we are always looking to change our surroundings. But maybe we should ask 'how can I change and how can I live out the faith in more incarnational ways?' People are looking for authenticity of purpose and real meaning and are attracted to congregation with people who are doing that." In Dale's view, faithful leaders and faithful congregations in the 21st century will be as concerned with prob-

lems outside the walls of the church as they are with problems inside the walls of the church.

On discussion of sexuality currently before the denomination, Dale invokes the image of the family as a metaphor for the church. He notes that The Presbyterian Church in Canada has always worked ecumenically with those with whom we don't fully agree. "If we can embrace differences outside the house why can't we have differences inside the house?" he asks. "Any family of five discussing a complex issue in the world today will not likely agree fully but that doesn't mean the family has to break up." Pointing to the history of the Protestant movement, Dale recalls that the Protestant movement repeatedly battled for purity of doctrine, the Bible, of Jesus and it has not always led to positive things in the last 500 years. Dale wonders if there isn't a different pattern and way of addressing problems than continuing to break up the family. The question is "How do we make room for each other, allowing for the integrity of each other?"

Reflecting on the principle of Visionary Leadership (one of the core features of the Strategic Plan created and adopted by The Presbyterian Church in Canada), Dale says, "There is an assumption out there that the vision hasn't been given to us already and that it is our responsibility to invent it and that sort of thinking is not always helpful. God has a vision. God has given us that vision. It is our task to embrace God's vision in our own individual contexts. Every congregation has that opportunity." And Dale asserts that tapping into God's vision is something that ultimately gives, and is an act of hope. "We rob ourselves of eschatological hope if we don't keep the big vision before us. Moses is a good example. He found his place in God's vision but he never got to the Promised Land, and yet, because the vision was bigger than him, he was satisfied to see it from a distance. When the vision is only ours it isn't bigger than we are and therefore we lose hope if we don't see it come to fruition. Dale is inspired by people like Mahalia Jackson singing "We Shall Overcome." She didn't see the fullness of that vision, but she could still sing, "One day it's going to be alright." Where did the civil rights get its energy? Where will the church get its energy? The question posed to Ezekiel is "Can these bones live?" The answer is yes and it comes from of the vision God. We can quit as soon as God throws in the towel. Until then, we have work to do.



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Hurricane Matthew devastated roads and homes, flattened fields, caused food and water shortages and triggered widespread illness. PHOTO CREDIT: THOMAS LOHNES/DKH



Anna Muir and François Merisma, project manager at FODES—the local organization that provided post-hurricane food distributions with PWS&D and CFGF support.

**Presbyterian  
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& Development**



Micheline, a single mother from Labrousse, shares her gratitude for the distribution of rice, corn, beans, herring and oil that saved her family.

# Sharing to Survive: Resilience, Compassion and Community in Haiti

By Anna Muir,  
Communications Assistant

Even from 30,000 feet above, Haiti was unlike anything I'd ever seen.

From my seat on the plane beginning its descent, I gaped at stunning turquoise waters that nestled an expanse of mountainous terrain, streaked with patches of deforested land and clusters of crumbled buildings. I suddenly realized how far removed from my comfort zone I was about to be. This wasn't just my first visit to a Presbyterian World Service & Development project—it was my first time out of North America.

I had the privilege of accompanying Julia Rao, PWS&D program coordinator, on a monitoring trip to Haiti at the beginning of April. Over the course of 12 days we visited local partners and saw the impact of projects PWS&D is supporting in emergency relief, food security, nutrition and care for victims of gender-based violence.

Born out of revolution, shaped by political corruption and shaken by deadly storms, Haiti continues to face significant developmental challenges. As we explored the poorest country in the western hemisphere, issues of hunger, inequality and injustice came to life.

I was particularly struck by the massive divide between the rich and the poor.

Wealthy residents of the suburb Pétion-Ville live just blocks from Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, where roads overflow with garbage, homes lack proper sanitation, and women and men earn just enough to survive by selling mangos, potatoes and beans from a sheet of canvas.

Elegant restaurants serving extravagant dishes are just 10 minutes from a community where children are severely malnourished because their families can't afford basic necessities.

In the poorest parts of Haiti, *Thank you Lord and God is Great* is painted on buses and scrawled on the sides of buildings. But I struggled to see evidence of God's kingdom.

That is, until we visited Labrousse—a village on Haiti's southern peninsula.

On October 4, 2016, Labrousse was pummelled by Hurricane Matthew—a powerful storm that devastated much of the island nation—triggering illness and widespread food and water shortages.

With partners at Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the ACT Alliance, PWS&D responded to provide humanitarian aid for impacted communities. In La-

brousse, food packages and vegetable seeds were delivered to 800 farming families.

Squished in the back of a ramshackle van, we bounced over rough roads on our way to meet with project beneficiaries. I prepared myself to encounter farmers who were morose and hungry, possibly irritated by our intrusion.

But in the warm, sunlit room where we met the participants, optimism and gratitude abounded.

As the farmers recounted the challenges they'd faced and the process of rebuilding, what quickly became apparent was a powerful sense of community. These men and women were working together to improve their living conditions since the hurricane. In Haitian Creole, joining together to achieve a common goal is called *Kombit*.

I began to see *Kombit* as a way of life—sharing to survive.

Every beneficiary we met in Labrousse, just beginning to pick up the pieces of their lives, said they shared their food rations with families that were not part of the program, even those outside their own community.

Farmers participating in a PWS&D climate-change resilience program were learning how to produce compost together, to



A common agricultural system in Haiti is called *Kombit*—farmers working together on one plot of land and sharing in its abundance.

improve yields on their collective plot of land and share in its abundance.

I witnessed *Kombit* when I met women devoted to the care of a malnourished child belonging to one teenaged mother in their village. They were the community caregivers, lending their time and any supplies they had to give the little girl a fighting chance.

In a place I expected to find very little, I discovered resilience, compassion and community in abundance. There is a long way to go to help lift the most vulnerable out of poverty, but in the spirit of neighbour helping neighbour, I first found signs of abundant life.

After that, the signs were everywhere: when a farmer, beaming, shared that he can support his family again with seeds from a PWS&D project. When a doctor leading the gender-based violence treatment program reported that victims of sexual assault are hopeful again. When a child took the first few bites of life-saving therapeutic food.

While it might be hard to spot at first, change is growing from



Pictured with her grandmother, a baby girl living in Saint Marc, Haiti, receives treatment for malnutrition from a PWS&D project in collaboration with Zanmi Lasante and CFGF.

the seeds of hope we are planting through our partners and programs in Haiti with the generous support of Presbyterians in Canada. This strengthens and inspires me as I continue working to uphold God's vision of abundant life—in Haiti and throughout our global village.



## From the Director's Desk



By Guy Smagghe,  
Director of Presbyterian World  
Service & Development

PWS&D aspires to achieve sustainable development in some of the poorest communities in the world. While it might be easier and more immediately gratifying to provide handouts to people in need, we are challenged to provide a hand up whenever we can.

A few years ago, as I completed my masters degree, I looked at the impact PWS&D support had on women's empowerment in south India. While difficult to measure something like empowerment, there was clear evidence that women were taking charge of the challenges faced by their communities.

The women were able to go to the police station and request that illicit liquor stands be closed down in order to protect the health of their families. They ask that sanitation facilities be built for women in urban slums. They ask politicians to recognize women's rights and ensure that the police will protect them.

When we started working in Madurai, a few dozen women were organized in women's groups. They saved money together, started small businesses and shared their experiences and challenges. They also learned about their rights.

Every year, new groups were formed in slums around Madurai. Every year, members of the women's federation would gather on International Women's Day, march through the city and gather to make new demands from authorities to ensure the protection of women's rights.

After 15 years of collaboration, the movement included nearly 20,000 women. They were hard pressed to find a hall large enough to hold them all. Impressively, every single woman wore the same coloured saree—to show unity in purpose. I was there in 2008 and was astounded by this large crowd.

A handout often comes in the

form of a transfer in kind, such as money or material goods. These tend to have a short-term effect. Alternately, a hand up, is usually in the form of a transfer of knowledge. This has a more long-term effect and can be transformational in a person's life. Some handouts can be valuable in enabling the transfer of knowledge. While PWS&D partners engage in both types of programming, the goal is always to have a long-term impact.

When we can facilitate access to education for girls in Afghanistan, this might include helping to pay for teachers' salaries and providing school supplies, which enables a productive learning environment.

When I sat in a classroom in Afghanistan with local community leaders and school teachers (mostly men), they were very enthusiastic about the project in their community. They wanted to see more girls accessing education. They know that for girls to ever have access to female doctors and teachers, it begins with providing access to primary and secondary education for girls. They know that the future of their country lies in the education of their children, and particularly in allowing the potential of girls to contribute fully to society. That is



**PWS&D protects and promotes the rights of women.** Pictured here, a woman marches at an International Women's Day celebration in Madurai, a city in the Tamil Nadu state in southern India. PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL JEFFREY



**PWS&D supports the Girls' Education Project with Community World Service Asia (CWSA) in Afghanistan,** which helps increase the value placed on education and literacy for girls and women. PHOTO CREDIT: CWSA

the path toward a sustainable and peaceful future.

Transfer of knowledge, access to knowledge, those are the keys to being able to live up to one's aspirations. The most basic of which is to be able to feed one's family without having to worry every morning whether or not there will be enough food.

For some people that means living off land they inherited from their ancestors. Finding ways to maximize the productivity of that land and its resilience to the impact of climate changes is most useful. Our conservation agricultural projects in Malawi are helping farmers double or triple the production of their fields while avoiding the high costs of expensive inputs (fertilizers, pesticides), all while protecting the soil from erosion.

As I think back over 20 years of work with PWS&D, I have seen our partners successfully striving to make a transformational difference in the lives of those who live in participating communities.

I have seen orphans grow up to be program leaders with our partners, illiterate women become strong proponents of women's rights, and small-scale farmers inspiring others in their communities to adopt practices that double or triple the output of their land, thereby improving their financial security.

The challenges to overcoming poverty and inequality may be greater than we think, but one story at a time we are making a sustainable difference.

**Check back in every issue for news from the Director's Desk**

## Part of \$1 Million Response to Rohingya Refugee Crisis

By Karen Bokma,  
Communications Coordinator

Extreme violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State has forced over half a million Rohingya people to flee from their homes and seek refuge in Bangladesh.

The Rohingya are descendants of Muslims who came to Myanmar generations ago. They speak a different language and practice a different religion than the majority of Myanmar's citizens, who are Buddhist. The Myanmar government considers them stateless and places restrictions on their rights as citizens.

Violence broke out at the end of August when Rohingya militants attacked government forces. According to the United Nations, the Myanmar government responded against the Rohingya

with disproportionate violence.

Entire villages have been destroyed and there has been widespread panic and flight. Refugees—mostly women, children and the elderly—are pouring into a small region of Bangladesh and settling in miserable shelter conditions with little food and limited medical and sanitation services.

**As Christians, we are called to respond.**

PWS&D, in partnership with members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, is responding by helping to provide life-saving food assistance in the Cox's Bazar region of Bangladesh, where many of the refugees have settled. Emergency rations of

lentils, oil, sugar and salt will be distributed to 18,000 people.

In collaboration with partners at the ACT Alliance, PWS&D is also able to respond to meet needs for non-food items, temporary shelter, sanitation services and psychosocial assistance.

As Christians, we are called to respond to the world's pain and despair. Please join with us in supporting relief efforts for Rohingya refugees and continue to pray for an end to hatred and violence in Myanmar.

**You can make a donation to support PWS&D's response through your church, by donating online to [WeRespond.ca/donate](http://WeRespond.ca/donate) or calling 1-800-619-7301 ext. 291. Please mark all donations "Rohingya Crisis"**



**Forced from their homes with nothing, Rohingya families are pouring into a small region of Bangladesh and settling in miserable, cramped shelter conditions.** PHOTO CREDIT: WORLD RENEW





Members of a youth sexual and reproductive health club gather for a meeting in a church in Emanyeleni, Malawi. With assistance from LISAP, club members educate their peers about avoiding HIV transmission, resisting early marriages and the prevention of early school dropouts. PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL JEFFREY



Mphatso Nguluwe speaks during the launch of child protection bylaws in a Malawian community alongside government officials.

## PWS&D Partner Spotlight: Mphatso Nguluwe-Livingstonia Synod Health Department

After serving as the director of the Livingstonia Synod AIDS Program (LISAP) in Malawi for nine years, Mphatso Nguluwe has been appointed director of the Synod of Livingstonia Health Department. PWS&D has faithfully supported development and relief work through these partners for decades. The PWS&D-supported program that Mphatso managed at LISAP aims to empower vulnerable youth in three communities by increasing girls' enrolment in school, reducing HIV infections, and promoting youth participation in social and economic activities. In her new role, Mphatso will oversee PWS&D's maternal and child health program in northern Malawi.

Mphatso understands how challenging it can be for poor families to send their children to school. She grew up in different homes all over Malawi—living with an aunt, an uncle, her grandmother—whoever could afford her school fees at the time.

Motivated by her own experience, Mphatso is committed to supporting vulnerable children to get an education, enough food to eat and the chance to live a full, healthy life. By empowering youth, she is paving the way for vulnerable communities to transform.

### How did you become director of LISAP?

I am a nurse by profession. I was teaching nursing at the Ekwendeni College of Health Sciences when I heard that the director of LISAP was leaving. I was selected as the replacement.

### What is a typical day at work like?

Crazy. It's always changing. But the most important thing for me is to greet my staff in person in the morning and make sure they're doing okay. Then you get into meetings, reports and proposals.

### What has surprised you most about your experience with LISAP?

When I was a nurse, I thought I had seen true suffering. But when you go into villages, you see real Malawians—the real Malawi—where there is real suffering. When I saw the way people were living, without enough food and water, I thought, I don't know my country.

### Has there been a particularly memorable moment for you so far in your career?

I remember meeting a little girl named Tumpe. She was married at eight years old. When I found her, I helped her go back to school. Now when I see her, I see

such a change. She was a miserable child and now she is beaming. Now she looks like a child. That was the person and the moment that made me want to fight for girls' rights.

I also remember meeting a little girl named Dora. She was HIV positive for a long time. After working with her, she improved so much. It was a transformation. She has died now, but she is a saviour and symbol of hope for all the other children we care for.

### Why is this project so important? Why does it need Canadian support?

This is not just a project. It is an initiative. We are here to change the lives of people for the better. The only way we can do this is with people standing behind us, supporting us. Without this support, the cycle of poverty can only continue.

### What do you like to do when you're not working?

I love to visit my mother. She lives only an hour away. But if I have a day off, I also just love to lie in bed. Sometimes, I just want to have a lazy day!

### What message do you have for people in Canada?

To appreciate the development

work that is happening. We can only break cycles of poverty if we empower people themselves. Unless people understand their situation and that it can be improved—and they are empowered to make a change and have a better life—they cannot improve. This is not about PWS&D or LISAP. It's about the people and about God. What does God want

us to do? God wants us to care for others. We are fulfilling the call that we have been given.

*In coming editions of the Presbyterian Connection, please visit the PWS&D Partner Spotlight for exciting interviews and stories on the life and work of our dedicated partners across the globe*



## Take the Advent Challenge!

During the Advent season, we celebrate God's amazing gift—Jesus! Inspired by God's overwhelming generosity, we too work to make a difference for our sisters and brothers across the globe. Each week of Advent, PWS&D challenges individuals and congregations to complete the Advent challenges

and share the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love with those living in some of the most vulnerable communities in the world. In the midst of poverty, injustice and disaster, the Christ light shines.

To help create bright futures through the Advent Challenge, visit [WeRespond.ca/advent-challenge](http://WeRespond.ca/advent-challenge).





# Sponsorship Corner



The Nahhas family at the airport. Sponsored by a team from the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry, the family arrived in Canada in April.

*The Rev. Marianne Emig Carr,  
First Presbyterian Church,  
Brockville, ON*

When writing about my refugee sponsorship experiences for the Sponsorship Corner, I wasn't sure where to start because I have been part of three different refugee sponsorship groups! Each one has been very different, both because of the refugees being sponsored and because of the groups themselves with which I continue to work.

Brockville, a city of about 20,000 people located one hour south of Ottawa, has a history of supporting refugees. Many Dutch people moved to the area after World War II. Brockville welcomed a large number of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s, many of whom stayed in the community. So when the Syrian refugee crisis came to the public's attention in September 2015, many people from Brockville—including First Presbyterian—stepped up as sponsors.

The first sponsorship group consisted of an ecumenical coalition of five local churches. We chose to sponsor a family via the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) initiative. Courageously, we decided to sponsor a Syrian family of 10 (parents and eight children). Only nine days passed from the time we were approved as a sponsorship group until the time the family arrived in February 2016! We had very little time to prepare for their coming.

The biggest challenge we faced was that the family had many needs, on top of limited language skills and education. They also struggled with feelings of homesickness as they slowly adjusted to life in Canada.

Now, over a year later, the family is thriving in our community. The children are enjoying school—learning English quickly and making friends. As seven of the children are girls, we are grateful that they have opportunities in Canada that they might not otherwise have had.

The second sponsorship is through the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry. The Presbytery's Refugee Sponsorship Committee sponsored two Syrian cases that were referred to us—one a family of five (senior parents, two adult daughters and one child) and the other a single woman teaching English in the Gulf States. The refugees arrived in April and September 2017. The family settled in Kemptville (near Ottawa) and the single woman arrived in Brockville.

The transition for these refugees has been less challenging, as they were well educated with very good English skills. Our sponsorship efforts have benefited from having two Syrian clergy in our Presbytery who, with their congregations, have been instrumental in the settlement process. We have also received exceptional support from many small, rural congregations.

The greatest challenge is that

three of the refugees are professionals (civil engineer, pharmacist and teacher) and the process for recognizing their credentials in Canada is long, slow and expensive.

The third sponsorship is a partnership between First Presbyterian Church and two local community groups. After unsuccessfully applying for private sponsorship spaces under The Presbyterian Church in Canada's 2017 allocation, we were offered the opportunity to sponsor a Syrian family of five (parents and three children) who were originally being sponsored by another group.

Again, like the Presbytery-sponsored refugees, there are two professionals (engineers) in the family. While they are very well educated and speak excellent English, we are concerned about whether they will be able to find satisfactory work—especially in our community, which is smaller and lacking some of the employment opportunities that exist in larger communities.

It has been a joy working with so many wonderful church partners, including PWS&D staff Rob Shropshire and Michelle Ball, as well as the local Muslim community. I have made life-long friendships and learned so much. As Matthew 25:40 says, *"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."* But I sometimes wonder who has been more blessed—the refugees or me!

# Presbyterians in Action

Acting in their local communities, Presbyterians across Canada are helping create peaceful, hopeful and sustainable futures for our sisters and brothers across the globe.

## Fighting Famine in South Sudan

It's fitting that the theme for Vacation Bible School at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., last summer was "Hero Central." After raising \$797 for famine relief in South Sudan for their Mighty Ministry Project, the compassionate children are truly superheroes! Their efforts are helping deliver life-saving food and nutrition support for families enduring displacement.



A presentation on famine in South Sudan during Vacation Bible School at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

## Sharing God's Love

Upholding God's promise of abundant life for all creation, the Mission and Theological Society of Knox College donated \$768 of the school's annual offering to PWS&D projects.

## Helping Families Farm for the Future

Youth at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Beaconsfield, Que., took on the Sunday School Challenge and filled a piggy bank with \$144 to help families in Guatemala farm for the future. "It's opened up a lot of doors for conversation about how God works in our hearts to create positive change in the world," says Stevie Pemberton-Thriepland, director of youth ministry at Briarwood.



## Pig Roast and Bean Supper

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank growing project in Woodstock, Ont., hosted its annual Pig Roast and Bean Supper at Knox Presbyterian Church in September. "A delicious meal of roast pork brought 275 people together and raised \$3,000 for the Foodgrains Bank," shares Steve McInnis, a member of Knox and PWS&D's committee. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a coalition of church-based agencies, including PWS&D, working together to end hunger.

## Moving for Moms and Babies in Afghanistan and Malawi

On September 30, 40 PWS&D supporters across Canada cycled, walked and raised money for PWS&D's maternal, newborn and child health project in the Ride for Refuge. The dedication and enthusiasm of participants and sponsors brought in over \$9,500 in support of vital health care for moms and babies across the globe.



**In response to God's call to act, Presbyterians are making a difference—thank you for all that you do!**

Thomas Hillier from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., cycling 25 km in the Ride for Refuge in Toronto. PHOTO CREDIT: VICTORIA HILLIER



## BOOK REVIEW

# Learning to Discern Together



By Emily Hill, Education Program  
Coordinator, Canadian Ministries

*Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups*

By Ruth Haley Barton, 253 pages,  
IVP Books, 2012

Take a moment to think back on the last few years of ministry in your context: How many of your congregation's decisions have truly felt like a response to the presence and promptings of God?

While most Christians would agree that pursuing God's will is central to our faith, when it comes to making decisions in our personal or congregational lives, we often turn to human wisdom and strategic thinking instead of to God. Learning to open ourselves up to the wisdom of God, especially in a collective way, is a spiritual practice that takes time and intentionality

to develop.

In *Pursuing God's Will Together*, Ruth Haley Barton argues that, in order for our faith communities to act in accordance with God's will, we need leaders who are committed to putting discernment at the center of their practice. While most ministry leadership groups know how to be decision-makers and overseers, few know how to be what Barton calls "communities for discernment" (15).

As a first step in creating a community for discernment, Barton recommends that leaders make space for hearing from God in their personal lives through spiritual practises, such as self-examination, holy listening and silence. She then provides guidelines and tools for sharing those practices as a leadership group, with special attention paid to creating an atmosphere of openness, non-judgment, unity, trust, shared values and covenant keeping.



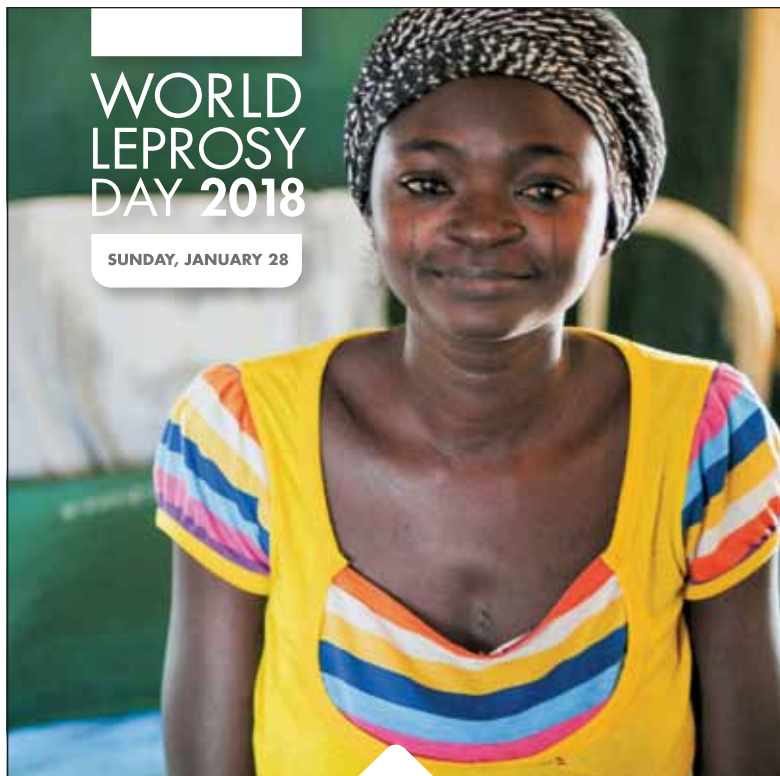
While the first part of Barton's book focuses on establishing a robust and habitual practice of "deep listening to God and each other" (170), the second part focuses on the actual process of collective decision-making as a discerning community. The process she recommends is made up of three major phases that involve a creative

mix of preparation, self-inspection, prayer, genuine listening, openness to scriptural insight, attentiveness to inner movements, and commitment to unity and working toward collective agreement.

Barton is the first to admit that the discernment process she suggests will likely seem overwhelming to

busy ministry leaders. While it may be tempting to read this book as an all-or-nothing manual, Barton recommends "read[ing] with your spiritual heart" (16) to see what insights God draws you toward as you read. I echo Barton's advice to start by choosing just one or two things that you will do to create a space for listening for God's will. If nothing else, I'm certain you will find the beautiful prayers and practical discernment exercises included at the end of each chapter helpful in strengthening your leadership group's ability to listen to each other and to God.

**Canadian Ministries hosts a series of webinars on leadership and renewal. To watch a previously recorded webinar on discernment or to sign up for any of our upcoming videos, visit [presbyterian.ca/webinar-wednesday](http://presbyterian.ca/webinar-wednesday)**



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## GATHERINGS



On June 11, the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fort-Coulonge, Que., celebrated Barry Stitt's 45 years of service as an elder at the church. Barry (centre) is seen here receiving a framed photo of the church from the Rev. Patricia Van Gelder (left) and Lyn Thrasher, Clerk of Session.



In Prince Edward Island, the Kensington Presbyterian Church's Sunday School's focus this year is "serving others." For the Thanksgiving food drive, the Sunday School took all of the church's donations to the local food bank after Sunday morning worship. Youth learned about the food bank, where the food comes from and how it's distributed in the community. In this picture, youth are standing with Theresa Cousins, one of the coordinators of the Kensington Food Bank.



Point Edward Presbyterian Church, located near Sarnia, Ont., celebrated their 145th anniversary on May 7, 2017. Mayor Bev Hand and Deputy Mayor Janice Robson, both members of the congregation, presented a plaque in honour of the anniversary to the Rev. Shirley Murdock.



St. Luke's Presbyterian Church and the West River Pastoral Charge in Pictou County, N.S., celebrated Canada's 150th at their annual Log Church Service. Participants dressed in red and had a special Canada cake to go along with their barbecue. The Log Church in Loch Broom is a replica of the first church built in Pictou County and had its first service in 1787. The Rev. Marianne Grant sang two songs in Gaelic during the service to remember that the original services were two hours in Gaelic and two hours in English! Pictured above are Henry Parks, Cyndi Parks, Jean Gates and the Rev. Marianne Grant inside the church.



Members of Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church in Ridgetown, Ont., enjoyed a historical tour of decommissioned churches. One is now a Legion museum, another has a suitable marker erected on the former property, and the third location remains standing as a privately owned church building. The Mt. Zion group gathered in the sanctuary to enjoy a time of hymns and prayers—a tribute to the early settlers of the Port Glasgow area who formed the congregation in 1828.



## GATHERINGS



The congregation of St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont., organized Orange Shirt Day on September 30 in honour of the students of residential schools. The group participated in the Blanket Exercise, an interactive exercise that demonstrates how Indigenous people have experienced colonization. Guest speaker Eugene Arcand attended residential school in Saskatchewan and is a member of the Governing Circle for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.



Gathering on the church steps facing the Supreme Court, the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa spent a week in August hosting Hero Central Summer Camp. With 50 kids and over 30 volunteers, the full-day camp taught kids (and leaders!) to do good deeds, seek peace and go after it!



On May 28, 2017, after Sunday worship, Calvin Presbyterian Church in Kitchener, Ont., held a celebration of the multicultural diversity of the congregation. Flags were hung from all of the countries people have come from to be members and worship together in Kitchener. After recognizing the countries, everyone joined together for a barbecue and fundraiser put on by the youth group. Eighteen countries are represented in front of the church.



St. Andrew's in Belleville, Ont., celebrated three years with their interim minister Pastor Job van Hartingsveldt with a service of hymn singing, solos and narratives about the hymns.



Elmwood Avenue Presbyterian Church of London, Ont., together with Village Opera, presented two performances of "Amahl and the Night Visitors" by Gianni-Carlo Menotti on November 17 and 19. The opera tells the story of a young disabled boy named Amahl who, with his mother, are visited by the Three Kings on their way to find the Christ Child. It is a touching story with beautiful music.



During Ridgeway, Ontario's 150th Canada parade, bells rang out from Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church as members passed by on their prize-winning float.



## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

# Peeling for Change



By Barb Summers  
Associate Secretary,  
Communications Office

The Raw Carrot is a social franchise that partners with churches and non-profits across Ontario to create meaningful employment for individuals with dis(abilities) or mental health challenges. Together, staff make and sell gourmet soup in local communities.

The Raw Carrot was founded by Rebecca Sherbino and Colleen Graham. They recognized that although Ontario has a great deal of wealth, there are also those who live on the margins, struggling to get by.

"There are 900,000 people on social assistance in Ontario," says Rebecca. "Almost 500,000 of those are on ODSP (the long-term Ontario Disability Support Program). Supportive employment can provide much needed opportunities for work

and many of these individuals desire the chance to be a part of community life. As a not-for-profit social enterprise, The Raw Carrot provides work and pays all staff salaries through the sale of soup. We believe that providing a 'hand up' is way more awesome than a handout. Watching how employment impacts the lives of our staff members is amazing! We are continually humbled by how gifted our staff are in different areas and are able to thrive in this environment. This opportunity can significantly change lives."

The Raw Carrot strives to address underlying causes of poverty and marginalization by providing meaningful employment opportunities. It's an attempt to break down barriers of social exclusion and isolation, bringing people who can and want to work back into the workforce. By purchasing The Raw Carrot's gourmet soup, a socially conscious shopper re-



Left to right: Lori Nason, Pauline Hogewoning, Melanie McNamara, Heather Moore and Nolan Balicki in The Raw Carrot Paris kitchen.

ceives a healthy product, while contributing to local employment.

The organization's tagline "peeling for change" is apt—there is a lot of peeling that takes place to produce their Signature Carrot Soup, as well as others such as the Flying Chicken Noodle, Spicy-ish Sausage and Cab-

bage, Veggie Mania, and Hearty Lentil and Barley.

The first Raw Carrot opened at Paris Presbyterian Church in Paris, Ont., and a second location opened at Mt. Forest United Church in Mt. Forest, Ont., in September. Plans are also underway to open additional lo-

cations in Hamilton and Kitchener in 2018.

**To learn more about The Raw Carrot, visit [therawcarrot.com](http://therawcarrot.com). The Raw Carrot efforts are supported in part by a bequest from The Presbyterian Church in Canada**

# Remembering Chanie Wenjack in Orillia, ON

By Barb Summers  
Associate Secretary,  
Communications Office

A special event was held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont., in September, titled, "The Secret Path—An Evening with Mike Downie." The event drew about 300 people, including students from Lakehead University and Georgian College. The event was supported by the Experimental Fund of the PCC. It was hosted by Tending the Sacred, an inter-church initiative designed to provide programs and workshops for people who are faith based or searching for a faith community. The Rev. Karen Horst, minister at St. Andrew's, is one of the group's founders.

Mike Downie, brother of the late Gord Downie from the rock band The Tragically Hip, was the guest speaker. Mike and his brother co-created Secret Path, a project that included a graphic novel, record and accompanying animated short film that aired on the CBC last fall, telling the story of Chanie Wenjack.

Chanie Wenjack was an Anishinaabe boy and only 12 years old when he ran away from the Presbyterian-run Cecilia Jeffrey Residential



Mike Downie addresses the crowd.

School, located near Kenora, Ontario. Chanie's attempt to return home to be with his father led to his death on the side of railway tracks, one week after his escape from the residential school and over 60 km from where he had started. He died from hunger and exposure to harsh weather.

Mike Downie spoke about his first encounter with Chanie Wenjack's story, and the journey Mike and Gord embarked upon to share Chanie's



The Rev. Karen Horst (St. Andrew's PC, Orillia), the Rev. Linda Patton-Cowie (St. Mark's PC, Orillia) and Mike Downie.

story with a wider audience. Mike spoke about reading a 1967 Maclean's article entitled "The Lonely Death of Chanie Wenjack." Compelled, he then sought the documents from the public inquiry into Chanie's death, which occurred 51 years ago. He shared these articles with Gord. Secret Path was the result. Mike and

Gord's work drew attention to the disturbing experiences of 150,000 residential school students, and the 6,000 children who died at school. The event at St. Andrew's this past September means 300 more people now know Chanie's story and 300 people have been challenged to respond—to learn about the legacy of

residential schools, to talk to others, to build new relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that reflect mutual respect and love of neighbour.

**To learn more about Chanie Wenjack and the PCC, visit [presbyterian.ca/chanie](http://presbyterian.ca/chanie)**



## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

# Connecting to the Reformed Tradition



*By the Rev. Robert Murray, Pinawa Christian Fellowship in Pinawa, Man., an Ecumenical Shared Ministry recognized by the Anglican Church of Canada, Mennonite Church Manitoba, the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Church of Canada. Pinawa is a community of approximately 1,300 people halfway between Winnipeg and Kenora*

It was my privilege this summer to serve as one of three delegates from The Presbyterian Church in Canada to the General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches meeting in Leipzig, Germany, from June 27 to July 7. The WCRC was formed in 2010 as a union of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council. The WCRC is now the largest association of Reformed churches in the world with 229 member denominations in 108 countries.

This was my first time attending a worldwide gathering and the energy was amazing. Youth and Women's Pre-Councils began meeting the week before and we entered into a work in progress. The logistics of the event were extraordinary as they coordinated hospitality and the work of hundreds of delegates, students and youth, and resource people. A crowd of 70 young stewards drawn from all over the world, and in bright red shirts, were on hand to direct and help at every turn. The worship and business of the Council goes on in English, French, German, Indonesian, Korean and Spanish—with lots of side conversations in other languages! The main meeting was in the Leipzig Messe, an immense convention centre, which continues an unbroken tradition of trade fairs in the city that goes back a thousand years. We also had two days where the entire Council got on buses and left Leipzig to convene in the Berliner Cathedral, the central cathedral in Berlin, for a nationally televised worship service, and then in Martin Luther's church in Wittenberg, where we commemorated 500 years since the Lutheran Reformation with Ecumenical Worship.

The WCRC only meets in General Council once every seven years, with

an Executive, President and General Secretary and small staff carrying on the work from year to year. The 2010 General Council stated that the newly united WCRC will be "called to communion and committed to justice" and the business reflected that dual focus. There was much talk of issues of justice as the various churches brought their concerns to the body in reports and recommendations. There was also time made for celebration.

This was a thoughtful gathering. There was a lot of time set apart for Bible Study and discussion. There were many learned—and often very long—addresses to the Assembly. There was a fascinating afternoon when the Council was held spellbound by the eminent theologian Jürgen Moltmann and three bright young women theologians in conversation. For this General Council it had been decided that a complicated and intensive process for consensus decision-making would be used. There was a lot of preparation and procedural work to do before the gathered Council came to any decision, and the listening groups and their facilitators worked long and hard to try to capture the shifting opinions of the delegates. The process was a bit clunky and frustrating at times, but the good will of the body (mostly) prevailed. It was remarkable to me that a gathering drawn from such an immense spectrum of cultural and theological convictions did manage to hold together through some difficult conversations, particularly when regional interests collided, or we turned to issues of gender justice and sexuality.

A major piece of business was the nomination and acceptance of a new President and members of the Executive who will steer the organization until the next General Council in 2024. Our PCC delegation supported the nomination of the Rev. Najla Kassab, a minister in the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL). Rev. Kassab had preached a powerful sermon from Martin Luther's pulpit at our worship in Wittenberg during the first week and she was affirmed as President by the General Council. The slate of nominations for the executive went through several iterations as



**Presbyterian delegates to the General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches: Hilary Hagar, the Rev. Stephen Kendall, the Rev. Robert Murray.**

the nominating committee attempted to balance gender, age and regional representation in a way that the entire council could accept. One of our PCC delegates, Hilary Hagar, was affirmed and will serve for the coming term. Hilary is a student of International Development (and a forest ranger in Algonquin Park this summer!). Our other voting delegate was the Rev. Stephen Kendall, our Clerk of Assembly, who

also served on the business committee of this General Council. The Rev. Mary Fontaine from Hummingbird Ministries was participating, and she is finished her term with the executive of the WCRC. The Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon was already in Leipzig, participating in the Women's Pre-Council, and she stayed with us as a resource person for the General Council. For a small denomination, the PCC has a

big presence in the World Communion of Reformed Churches!

I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the General Council. As a small town pastor in rural Manitoba I often feel like I'm serving out on the edges of the church. It was invigorating to be in the centre of the things for a few weeks, to make new friends and to connect with the deep roots of our Reformed tradition.

## Renewing Our Friendship in Almonte

*By Barb Summers  
Associate Secretary,  
Communications Office*

A reconciliation event hosted by the ecumenical group All My Relations took place on August 19, 2017, at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Almonte, Ont. The event attracted about 75 people, including the mayor and several church leaders.

Mississippi Mills All My Relations is a group of concerned community members living in the area who recognize that we have a responsibility to help restore what was once a relationship of trust and friendship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in our country. Believing that participation in the truth and in the reconciliation process in a meaningful way requires assistance from many people, All My Relations partners include Almonte Presbyterian Church, St. Paul's Anglican Church Almonte, Almonte United Church and Plenty Canada.

The event's topic, *Renewing Our Friendship: Reconciliation and the Birchbark Canoe*, featured talks by In-



**Chuck Commanda and a birchbark canoe.**

digenous speakers, including Chuck Commanda, Algonquin anthropologist and master canoe builder who built the birchbark canoes that were on display.

The event provided an opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of what it was like to grow up as an Indigenous

person in Canada. The stories were deeply personal and informative. A barbecue lunch included traditional foods and a closer look at the canoes. Participants went away with more mutual understanding of and a commitment to our shared responsibility for tending to the earth, our home.



## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

# Marking 200 Years in Richmond Hill

By Susan Falla-Johnson,  
Mission and Outreach Committee  
chair, Richmond Hill Presbyterian  
Church in Richmond Hill, ON

Sunday, October 15, 2017, marked a true gathering of community in the Town of Richmond Hill. Three hundred people came and celebrated with the congregation of Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (RHPC) on its 200th anniversary. Included with the congregation were former members, former ministers, friends, ministers from neighbouring churches and members of the Richmond Hill community.

Greetings were presented on behalf of the Governor General of Canada (read by the Rev. Duncan Jeffrey); Prime Minister of Canada (by Richmond Hill MP, Majid Jowhari); Lieutenant Governor of Ontario (by MPP and Minister of Research Innovation and Science, Reza Moridi); by the Mayor of Richmond Hill (His Worship Dave

Barrow); Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill MP, Leona Alleslev (read by Rev. Duncan Jeffrey); the Moderator of the Presbytery of Oak Ridges (Rev. Jonathan Dennis); and Thornhill Presbyterian Church (Rev. Dr. Heather J. Vais).

The Rev. Dr. Karen Horst, Moderator of the 141st General Assembly, was the keynote speaker. Her sermon entitled “Keep Calm and Disciple On” and words to the younger ones and the young at heart were wonderful. Her message was dynamic and engaging to everyone. Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church was blessed with an awesome day of remembrance. Not only in worship but also in the fellowship that followed. A very talented cake designer, Anna Herd (Ginger’s Cupcakes), and member of the congregation created an edible replica of the current church building. A beautiful centerpiece to mark a magnificent celebration. Thanks be to God!



Left to right: The Rev. Matthew H. McMillan, the Rev. Lt. Mark Kalvaitis, the Rev. Duncan Jeffrey, the Rev. Dr. Karen Horst, the Rev. Warren Ball, the Rev. James Ravenscroft, the Rev. Deb Rapport.

# Presbytery of Newfoundland Brings Many Things to the Table

By Lynne Allan, elder at  
St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church,  
Grand Falls–Windsor, NL

“It’s not every presbytery that can hold a meeting around a dining room table.” Those were the words of Rev. David Sturtevant, the newly installed moderator of the Presbytery of Newfoundland, after its eight members had done just that.

We had gathered at the St. John’s home of our clerk, Rev. Derek Krunys, for a barbecue in September, to be followed—just down the street at St. David’s—by our first meeting after the summer break. But it was cool and drizzly outside. And we were warm and dry inside...and we fit around the table. It didn’t take long to decide we would stay put. The meeting was called to order. The change of venue was homologated.

Is this a first? Perhaps not, but it does illustrate the smallness of the Presbytery of Newfoundland. What it doesn’t indicate, however, is how much the presbytery accomplishes on a provincial, regional and national basis, despite its size.

Being small is nothing new for the Presbytery of Newfoundland. When it was formed in 1875, there were three



**Presbytery of Newfoundland members gathered around the dining room table in the clerk’s home for its September meeting. Seated (l-r): Rev. Derek Krunys, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church; Rev. David Sturtevant, St. David’s Presbyterian Church; Lynne Allan, elder, St. Matthew’s Presbyterian Church. Standing: Kathy McKay, Presbytery’s immediate past moderator; Rev. Ian Wishart, interim moderator, St. Matthew’s; Lillian Crawford, Presbytery treasurer, St. David’s; Rev. Jeff Murray, assessor, St. Andrew’s, Sackville, N.B.; Margie Coombes, St. Andrew’s. Missing: Aubrey Bonnell, St. David’s; Murray MacDonald, outgoing assessor, Calvin, Halifax, NS.**

congregations, two of which were located in St. John’s. Mission work saw other congregations established on the west coast of the island, but there were many bumps along the path to growing—and simply maintaining—the presbytery. In 1876, fire destroyed both churches in St. John’s. The congregations joined to worship in a new building in 1879.

Then in 1892, a fire destroyed most of the city, including the new church. Its replacement was adversely affected by a bank crash in 1894. On the west coast of the island, from 1879 to 1880, ice prevented boats from reaching one area for months, leaving the population on the brink of starvation and the health of the minister broken.

Although the presbytery faced many challenges, there were also accomplishments. The church that had been lost in the St. John’s fire of 1892 was rebuilt, and St. Andrew’s (The Kirk) was dedicated in 1896. The St. John’s congregation of St. David’s, founded in 1775 and originally known as the Dissenting Church of Christ, was received into The Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1938. Grand Falls (now Grand Falls–Windsor) saw St. Matthew’s Presbyterian Church built in 1910. It was the first church of any denomination in the town, located more than 400 km from St. John’s. By then the Presbytery of Newfoundland had already been united with the Presbytery of Halifax, and later Cape Breton, for some 15 years, having been unable to function after the fires and bank crash in the 1800s. It would be another 28 years before the Presbytery of Newfoundland was re-established.

Fast-forward to 2017. The Presbytery of Newfoundland has once again faced the issue of amalgamation with another presbytery and has decided to remain independent with



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, St. John's.



St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church, Grand Falls–Windsor.

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## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

# Elder Emeritus Title Bestowed on Earl and Isabella Purmal

*By Molly Shannon, elder at South Gate Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, ON*

The term *Emeritus* is from Latin, originally meaning “veteran soldier.” It is an honorary title that is given to someone who has retired from a position or profession after serving with great distinction.

During the worship service at South Gate Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., on September 24, this recognition was given to Isabella and Earl Purmal. But due to declining health, Earl was not able to be present to receive his recognition. So earlier in the week, the Rev. Charmain Sebestyen, clerk of session Brenda Podio, and members of the Purmal family gathered at Queen’s Gardens long-term care residence to present the honour to Earl.

Earl and Isie first came to South Gath in the early ‘60s and, as their family grew, each daughter also became a member. With their more than 55 years at church, few in the congregation can remember a time when Earl and Isie weren’t there.

Earl was ordained as an elder in 1968, serving on session for 48 years. For 42 of those years, he was church treasurer. Earl always attended Bible Study whenever it was offered. He was a contributing member of the men’s group, the finance committee and the memorial committee. The role of trustee was also a part of Earl’s service to South Gate. He has indeed been a good and faithful servant of God and the church.

Isie became an elder in 1974, for a total of 42 years of active service. She made a major contribution to our church school as a teacher and church school superintendent. Isie was a member of the Women’s Missionary Society as well as the Women’s Auxiliary, where she did a term as president.

In past years, Isie participated in the Sensitivity Group and the Seniors at South Gate. Bible Study has been an ongoing part of her faith journey, as well as being a captain of the Prayer Chain. Some summers, Isie did pulpit supply, leading worship service during the vacation time of the minister. Showing just how caring a person she is, Isie has written numerous cheery notes to church members during times when they



**Isabella Purmal and Clerk of Session Brenda Podio.**



**Earl Purmal and the Rev. Sebestyen.**

needed encouragement.

Few of us realized that while Earl was our church’s treasurer, and before there were after-hours bank deposits, Isie walked to the bank every Monday morning to deposit the collection that Earl had counted the day before. Isie and Earl have always supported each other. In fact, many of us are aware of the love and sup-

port they have given each other during their long and happy marriage of 60 years.

Earl and Isabelle Purmal now join Gerry McNair, Jimmy Rollo and Norm Smith as Elders Emeritus. We are indebted to all of them for their long and dedicated service of doing God’s work here at South Gate Presbyterian Church.

## Presbytery of Newfoundland

*Continued from page 22*

three congregations—St. Andrew’s, St. David’s and St. Matthew’s. We have nine members representing all three churches, including three ministers and four elders, as well as two assessors. Assessors have been an important part of the presbytery’s history since it was re-established in 1938. Appointed by the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces, these individuals assist the presbytery with its work and maintain a quorum for the conduct of business. As the Rev. Ian Wishart, interim moderator of St. Matthew’s, describes it, “These people have brought new insights to the discussion of business and have provided a view of Newfoundland to other Atlantic Presbyterians.”

Murray MacDonald, an assessor from Nova Scotia who recently finished his term, agrees. “The appointment has provided me with experiences and information, much of which I have shared with other congregations.” In the last two years he has led visitation committees to all three congregations and organized a workshop on eldership.

Small numbers have not kept the Presbytery of Newfoundland from participating in denominational debates, or considering overtures, voting on remits and contributing views on other matters. In 2016, our clerk, the Rev. Krunys, organized a workshop on human sexuality. Over the years it has produced reports on social justice issues and amendments to the Book of Forms. Members of the Presbytery of Newfoundland have been, or still are, members of national and Synod committees and at one time three members concurrently held the offices of Moderator of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces, Moderator of General Assembly and President of the Atlantic Mission Society. At Synod’s most recent meeting in October, the Rev. Krunys was elected moderator.

“With only three active congregations, the Presbytery continues to survive and to provide service to its members, the community and the church at large,” says Mr. MacDonald. Included in its community involvement is Bridges to Hope, a food aid centre in St. John’s, which is operated in a collaborative effort by the United and Presbyterian churches.

The size of the Presbytery of Newfoundland has fostered co-operation among the three congregations, most notably between St. Andrew’s and St. David’s due to their close proximity. A recent Vacation Bible School at St. David’s attracted participants and volunteers from both churches. As well, for several years the presbytery employed a youth worker who served the two St. John’s churches. Kathy McKay, our immediate past moderator, says some of what she likes about our presbytery is that we work well together and recognize our unique situation of island life. “Not having lived on an island before I moved here, I see the resourcefulness and resilience of people who live on a—at times—hard island. Everyone seems to pull together for the greater good.”

The Presbytery of Newfoundland continues to work on its internal growth. One example is the recent restructuring of committees to make them more workable and effective. Newer members of the presbytery have been encouraged to not only sit on committees but to take the chair, as well as to reach out to the congregations for members with particular expertise.

In his parting message as assessor, Mr. MacDonald expressed his confidence in the presbytery’s future, saying, “The Presbytery of Newfoundland, although small in number, clearly makes up for it in dedication, energy and willingness to move forward in the work of the church.”



**St. David’s Presbyterian Church, St. John’s.**



## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

# Recognized for Service

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

Appropriately, on Thanksgiving Sunday, October 8, 2017, the Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson was recognized for his 11 years of service as the minister to seniors at Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Dr. Matheson had previously served as Senior Minister at Zion Church for a twenty-one year period during which time the church experienced amazing growth and benefited greatly from Gordon's passion for missions and his maritime-wide weekly radio broadcasts.

Following his retirement, Dr. Matheson enjoyed a brief time of rest before rejoining the congregation as both Minister Emeritus and Minister to Seniors. Having now completed his eleventh year in this important position, both he and wife Azalia feel it's time to start cutting back on what has been a



**Rev. Douglas Rollwage (left), Lead Minister of Zion Church along with Clerk of Session John Barrett congratulate Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson on his retirement**  
Photo credit: Cathy MacDonald.

lifetime of ongoing service. Not one to put his feet up, Gordon continues his role as interim moderator and pulpit supply at Nine Mile Creek Presbyterian Church and is frequently called upon for funerals and weddings.

The congregation, and in particular the many seniors and nursing home residents who have benefited from his visits, will greatly miss Dr. Matheson's regular involvement with Zion Church.

## REFLECTIONS

# Love Letter to Gord Downie's Family

*By Vivian Ketchum, originating  
from Wauzhushk Onigum Nation of  
Northern Ontario and now a member  
of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church,  
Winnipeg, MB*

The media reported the death of Gord Downie in October. The news hit me hard even though I was aware of his terminal brain illness. My emotions were similar to losing a close family member. I never even met the man or the hero, as many in the Indigenous community referred to him. I silently grieved for a man who brought our stories of residential schools to the general public. Out of the shadows and into the mainstream. Changing the perspectives of Canada's tragic history with the public. Gord Downie was a guide in leading the rest of Canada in walking in reconciliation with its Indigenous neighbours. A storyteller of words and songs.

As a young child in residential school, my secrets were only mine to keep. Alone. A burden that nearly broke me as an adult. Healing was a difficult thing to do and taking that first step was not easy. Listening to Prime Minister Harper's federal apology to Residential School survivors on June 1, 2008, was a public acknowledgement to the wrongs done to us. My secrets were real and so were my ghosts as in the words spoken by Mr. Harper.

Then the Truth and Reconciliation Commission wrapped up its work and came out with the 94 Calls to Action in 2015, in Ottawa. I heard Murray Sinclair's strong words, "We will act...!" I was in the same room as him as he came out with that strong statement of the calls to action. My shadow child, as I like to refer to my residential school past, had a protector in those brave words Mr. Sinclair spoke at the closing event.

I began to hear of a man called Gord Downie writing and speaking about residential schools and about a boy that ran away from Cecilia Jeffrey School. The boy froze to death and never got to go home. Gord Downie's words rang of sincerity and



empathy. The mainstream media got hold of the work Downie was doing with the Indigenous community. Residential schools started to become a topic discussed over the supper table. My residential school story was being heard and listened to by many in Canada. My shadow child had a voice in Gord Downie's words.

Sadly, the news about Gord Downie's terminal brain cancer saddened me on a personal level. My oldest son had passed away from an unknown brain tumour in 2011. The bond of friendship grew even though I never met Mr. Downie. I admired the work he was doing with Indigenous communities despite his illness. He was working and walking with the general public on reconciliation. Showing the world how to walk in peace and love with us. My shadow child had a champion in Gord Downie's words and work.

The day I read of his passing, I shed true tears of grief for a man who I never met. A man who met all of us residential schools survivors through the words he wrote and sang about. He was loved by many of us.

Gord Downie is the Man who walks among the stars.

# A Welcoming Presence

*By David Phillips, convener of the  
Maclean Estate Committee*

Lawrence Pentelow has guided the Maclean Estate Committee and the work at Crieff Hills Conference Centre Puslinch, Ont., with enduring vision and a steady hand, producing outstanding results. The recognition of Crieff Hills is not only within The Presbyterian Church in Canada but also in the community at large.

The Crieff Hills mission statement states: "Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre provides an eco-friendly place apart for spiritual renewal and leadership development. This Christian community welcomes individuals, families, congregations, businesses, schools and agencies to enjoy God's creation." Lawrence has provided leadership that goes beyond words to embrace the act of living out this statement.

Next year, Lawrence will complete

his role as managing director effect June 30, 2018, and will pass the torch to his successor. While it will be a time for Lawrence to begin another chapter in his life, it will also be an opportunity for him to look back with fond memories on the guests, the staff, board and volunteers he has worked with and the goals they achieved.

Crieff Hills, under Lawrence's leadership has truly become "A Place Apart... To Come Together." A welcoming place to everyone! There are a great number of options for guests—whether it be conferences or workshops; taking a personal day away; attending an event focused on developing improved environmental management practices; or advancing the acceptance of diverse populations within society. These standards and ideals are a tribute to the management of the facility.

For Lawrence, as he looks toward



**Lawrence Pentelow will retire from his position of Managing Director of Crieff Hills Conference Centre in 2018.**

retirement, he can move on knowing that Crieff Hills Retreat and Conference Centre has been left in a state of excellence.



**Short-Term Mission  
Opportunities with the PCC**

[presbyterian.ca/missiontrips](http://presbyterian.ca/missiontrips)



## REFLECTIONS

# The Sabbath is For Rest

By Marion Urquhart Charkow,  
Flesherton, ON

The Sabbath is for rest. So said a recent church bulletin from our local Presbyterian Church. “Hmm,” I thought, “it used to be, but whoever rests now?” As far back as my own parents could remember, Sunday was always a day of rest. In Guernsey, where my mother was born, the bean pot would be put into the communal ovens on Saturday evening to be picked up on the way home from the Town Church in St. Peter Port after its Sunday service and thus the women of the day had a very light load of household duties for the rest of the Sabbath. In the new world, although a roast was cooked for Sunday dinner, my mother would not knit, sew on a button, do the laundry or sweep the floor. Everyone, including housewives, deserved a rest.

My father coming from a very Scottish Presbyterian family would never play cards past midnight on Saturday, nor would he garden or paint or use a hammer on a Sunday. At Grandma Urquhart’s home on Yarmouth Avenue in Toronto, if we visited on a Sunday, we were only given a cup of tea if the kettle happened to boil on the wood stove. If it was summer, a glass of cold water would suffice. Her roast was cooked on Saturday, served cold on Sunday.



There were no baseball games, no theatres, no drinking establishments, and not even gas stations were open on Sunday within Toronto boundaries. Petrol could be obtained north of Wilson Avenue, if you were moved to go for a Sunday drive. For many, especially during the war years, the family car was only taken out on a Sunday visit to the grandparents, aunts and uncles or to meander down the country lanes. Hence the appellation of “Sunday drivers” always applicable to those doing less than the speed limit.

There were also no stores open, grocery or otherwise. Returning from our summer place at Baxter, Ontario, my brother would be most annoyed when our mother sent him into one of the few restaurants open in Wes-

ton, to get a loaf of bread or a quart of milk. She did try to bring these commodities home with her, but if it was a very hot day, milk would have soured very quickly in our ’36 Ford.

Now many years later, there seems to be no rest on a Sabbath and in most cases no Sabbath at all. Would all this busyness have contributed to the mess we’re in now with Global Warming threatening our very existence? Perhaps we should all take a big breath and set aside one day a week, it doesn’t have to be a Sunday or Saturday, just as long as one-seventh of our week is spent in quiet pursuits, family time, resting, meditating, getting in touch with each other, Mother Nature and whoever we call our Higher Power.

# And God Was Present

By Patricia Schneider, elder at Forbes  
Presbyterian Church, Grande Prairie, AB

The sun is shining and I leave its soft morning light and enter the sanctuary. There is a peace here and I watch as the pews gradually fill with mostly people that I know. The organist (a young friend of mine) is providing us with a concert this morning. I hear melodies that were part of my Music Appreciation in Grade 8B at school. (Years ago, I actually had occasion to write my old music teacher and thank her for introducing me to classical music. She was much moved.)

I had forgotten it was Communion Sunday. The table up front has everything ready and I feel a sense of comfort in knowing that here again is the opportunity to ask for the Spirit of God to guide my days. Of course, I do it every day, but here in the presence of so much fellowship with friends, I can feel God’s abiding love.

But there is laughter too as little ones enter, full of smiles and expectations. They know in a short while they will rush off to the basement and the Sunday children’s story and colouring time.

The man in front of me sits alone. Two other ladies ask him if his wife is unwell. “Just in the bathroom,” he replies. I ask the same question, get the same reply and in moments she is by his side. What a caring bunch. She’d had a bad medical scare a while

back. I told her that she couldn’t even go to the bathroom without alarming all of us. Laughter and grins radiated around us.

The baptism this morning included a small boy who had earlier danced up the church aisle, reminding us that in God’s eyes we are all children, but sometimes we forget to be as joyful as children. The child is not worrying about yesterday or tomorrow—today is full of music and he responds.

Later at coffee time I join a friend who has her grandchild with her. The young girl is a bit upset as Grandma has said “no” to a chocolate treat, as it is near lunchtime. I growl at the grandma, “Come on, give her a break, I love chocolate too, let her enjoy it.” The grandma and I share a grin and she nods to the child. A few minutes later, we both watch as she devours it with glee.

I am a much more mellow great-grandma than I was even as a grandma. Life is for the living and how I love to see these little ones smiling and enjoying these simple things.

Coffee time is over and I am nearly the last one to leave the church. I have been touched by the peace, joy and laughter that have filled the past three hours. In a world full of disorder and discord, it is wonderful to be joyful, prayerful and thankful...and to have felt God’s presence in this special time with his much loved children.

# A Challenge and a Calling

By the Rev. Hugh Appel in London, ON

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.” Isaiah 60:1

The winter of 1944–1945 was known in Holland as “the hunger winter.” I was born in Holland and lived through it. The country was occupied by Hitler and the Nazis’ devastation was severe. During that winter, there was no food, electricity or coal to use as fuel. As children we hunted about for food to eat such as sugar beets, bulbs or weeds that were to be cooked on the wood stove. Stores were empty and the schools were used by the German army for sleeping quarters, so there was no school for us.

During those cold and dark days, no one was allowed outside after 8:00

p.m. Black paper covered the windows, preventing the light of even a small lantern from being seen. When bombs were falling we would hide in the cellar until it was over. It was a time of hunger, danger and death. Many elderly people died of lack of nutrition.

Imagine the joy when the Canadian troops liberated us in May 1945. That last Christmas, the hunger winter was particularly bad. On Sunday afternoon, prior to Christmas, our Sunday school held the annual Christmas Pageant. For weeks we practiced Scripture portions from Isaiah 9 and Luke 2, which we recited in unison during the program. The church was cold and since there was no electricity, the pipe organ was pumped by two men standing on large pedals filling the bellows in order to sing the well-known Christmas carols. Prior to this, our



teacher told us that we would receive a surprise following the program. As it turned out, a baker in the congregation had got some flour and baked a few loaves of bread. It meant that each child received a small plate with a slice of bread covered with margarine. We were so surprised. I vividly remember taking small bites to make it last. It was like manna from heaven.

During the darkest time of hunger and suffering, we sang about the Child of God who came to bring us God’s light. Imagine it: a slice of bread became a perfect Christmas gift. Unforgettable!

Let me take you to another Christmas in 1973. At that time we lived in a small town called Sunderland,

about 45 km north of Whitby, Ont. I was appointed there to a two-point charge (serving two congregations) as student minister, while studying at Knox College in Toronto. A couple of weeks prior to Christmas, my wife Jane and I discussed the reality that we had a large heating oil bill coming up. It looked like there wouldn’t be any extras for Christmas. With three children, that could be a problem. What to do? While driving to school, I asked God to help us find a solution.

Coming home later that afternoon I came cross our neighbour generously blowing the snow out of our driveway. While waiting to park, I walked over to our mailbox to see if we had any mail. I found an envelope with the return address of Calvin Presbyterian Church, Toronto. When I opened it, a pink cheque fell out in the amount of \$250. Unbelievable! By then, our neighbour, Ross, pulled his tractor with the blower attachment out of our driveway. I honked my car horn and waved to thank him. I parked the car in the driveway ran inside and shouted, “Honey, we are rich!” Two-hundred and fifty dollars was a lot of money then. I recalled hearing the Rev Dr. Da-

vid Hay of Knox College tell me that Calvin Church would send a Christmas gift to married students studying theology. He had given the congregation our name. It could not have come at a better time.

On Christmas Eve we celebrated the Community Christmas Celebration. The church was packed. Jane directed a contemporary group of about 12 young people who shared special music for the occasion. Following the service, Jane and I stood at the door greeting the people and wishing them a blessed Christmas. The chairman of the board handed us a Christmas card and with a grin on his face told us that it was a Christmas gift. When we opened it later it said that both congregations were going to pay for our utilities.

Both Jane and I survived the horror of World War II. Christ gave us the challenge and calling to serve his church, sharing the good news that Christ is our Redeemer and LORD. No doubt many of us have experienced situations that are engraved in our memories. We wanted to share some of ours with you, being assured daily that God’s light has come, and the glory of the LORD will rise upon all.



## REFLECTIONS

# God is with Us in the Dark

By the Rev. Dr. Sarah Travis, Minister of the Chapel at Knox College, Toronto

In December, the sun sets earlier every evening, and the night grows longer. Advent begins in the dark. The gospel scripture for the first Sunday in Advent creates a vivid image of darkness — with no sun to brighten the moon, and stars falling out of the sky. These words are unsettling for those of us who would rather focus on fes-

tive lights and warm candlelight in this season. And yet, Advent is a time to be unsettled, to peer into the darkness of our world, and allow ourselves to be painfully aware of suffering and struggle. This awareness causes us to long for change, to yearn for the Light of the World to come again and dispel the darkness. Our hope that Christ will come again enables us to see in the dark, to navigate our way through personal despair and global

fear. The gospel writer encourages us to stay awake and pay attention. The darkness may frighten us, but it is in the dark we are most ready to receive Jesus the Christ.

*This reflection is taken from the PCC worship bulletin covers. Bulletin covers are available to congregations for every Sunday. Learn more at [presbyterian.ca/bulletins](http://presbyterian.ca/bulletins)*



## JUST WONDERING...



Have a question you need answered? Submit them to [connection@presbyterian.ca](mailto:connection@presbyterian.ca)

## My husband is Roman Catholic and his Bible has different and more books than mine. What does that mean? How can the Bible be different?

The version of the Bible used in your husband's church probably contains a collection of ancient texts called the Apocrypha in addition to the books of the Old and New Testaments. Apocrypha comes from writings produced during the period between the Old

and New Testaments (450 BC and 50 AD). Gradually, a number of these writings were regarded as inspired and deserving of a place in the Bible. According to the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops, the Bible approved for use in Canadian Roman Catholic churches is the New Revised Standard Bible (NRSV) that includes the Apocrypha. Many Presbyterian congregations use the NRSV, produced without the Apocrypha.

In his 1534 translation of the Bible, Martin Luther removed the apocryphal books from the Old Testament and gathered them in a separate col-

lection, saying, "they are not held equal to the Sacred Scriptures and yet are useful and good for reading." After that, many Protestant Bibles omitted them entirely. In 1546, the Roman Catholic Council of Trent listed the apocryphal books as truly inspired and approved.

## I attended the annual General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada this past June. I noticed that the Young Adult and Student Representatives weren't able to vote on matters that came up. Why is that?

Each year, presbyteries send some 250 ministers and elders to the General Assembly. Their primary task is to discern the will of God for our denomination. They do this by prayer, study, discussion and vote. They are responsible for decisions made at the Assembly and accountable to the presbytery that sent them. Presbyteries are also invited to name Young Adult Representatives to each Assembly. The denomination's three seminaries send student representatives. It is hoped this national exposure to the work of the church will be educational and stimulating. Although appointed by presbyteries and colleges, the youths and students are not representative of any group except that they represent young people and students in a general way. They are not held responsible for decisions made at the Assembly and, therefore, have no vote that is counted. In order to

enable the young people and students to express opinions, however, they have been granted an "advisory vote." Whenever they choose, they can request an advisory vote to indicate their views on an issue. This vote, though not included in the final tally, can influence the discernment of ministers and elders.

## During communion, our church uses grape juice instead of wine, even though the Bible readings all talk about Jesus sharing wine. Why is that?

Although there is some debate regarding the alcohol content of what Jesus and his disciples consumed, there is little doubt the cup Jesus raised during the last supper contained wine. Wine was the only option for Holy Communion until around 1869 when Thomas Bramwell Welch invented pasteurized grape juice. Many churches, during the 19th century temperance movement, made Welch's creation the drink of choice for the sacrament in order to avoid alcohol.

I've heard four reasons some churches only use grape juice today: 1. Even a small taste of wine could trigger a relapse for an alcoholic. 2. Some have made a moral decision to abstain from alcohol. 3. Alcohol might interfere with the effectiveness of some medicine. 4. Parents may not want their children to drink wine. Some churches offer both wine and grape juice at communion, providing worshippers a choice.

## OBITUARIES

Read full obituaries online at [presbyterian.ca](http://presbyterian.ca)

**The Rev. James "Jim" Roy Weir**  
Retired minister from Kincardine, Ont., and active presbytery and synod member. Deceased November 7, 2017.

**The Rev. Dr. Glyn Owen**  
Minister Emeritus of Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto. Deceased November 3, 2017.

**Margaret Near**  
Designated to the Order of Deaconesses on April 25, 1952, by the Presbytery of Guelph. Deceased October 22, 2017.

## PULPIT VACANCIES

To see all pulpit vacancies and other opportunities, visit [presbyterian.ca/vacancies](http://presbyterian.ca/vacancies)

**Pictou, First and St. Andrew** (full-time minister) – Atlantic Provinces  
**Miramichi** (Chatham), Calvin; Black River Bridge, St. Paul's; Kouchibouguac, Knox (full-time minister) – Atlantic Provinces  
**Renfrew** (full-time minister) – Quebec and Eastern Ontario  
**Ottawa, St. Stephen's** (full-time minister) – Quebec and Eastern Ontario  
**Pincourt, île Perrot** (full-time minister) – Quebec and Eastern Ontario  
**Coldwater, St. Andrew's** (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda (CNOB)  
**Norval** (part-time minister) – CNOB  
**Toronto, St. Mark's** (full-time minister) – CNOB  
**Toronto, York Memorial** (half-time minister) – CNOB  
**Sault Ste. Marie, Victoria and St. Paul's** (full-time minister) – CNOB  
**Smithville** (part-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario  
**Binbrook, Knox and Carluke, St. Paul's** (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario  
**Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Andrew's** (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario  
**Calgary, Grace** (full-time minister) – Alberta and the Northwest  
**Calgary, St. Andrew's** (Minister, Vision and Direction) (full-time minister) – Alberta and the Northwest  
**Edmonton, Mill Woods** (full-time minister) – Alberta and the Northwest  
**Kelowna, St. David's** (full-time minister) – British Columbia  
**Salmon Arm, St. Andrew's** (half-time minister) – British Columbia  
**West Vancouver** (full-time minister) – British Columbia



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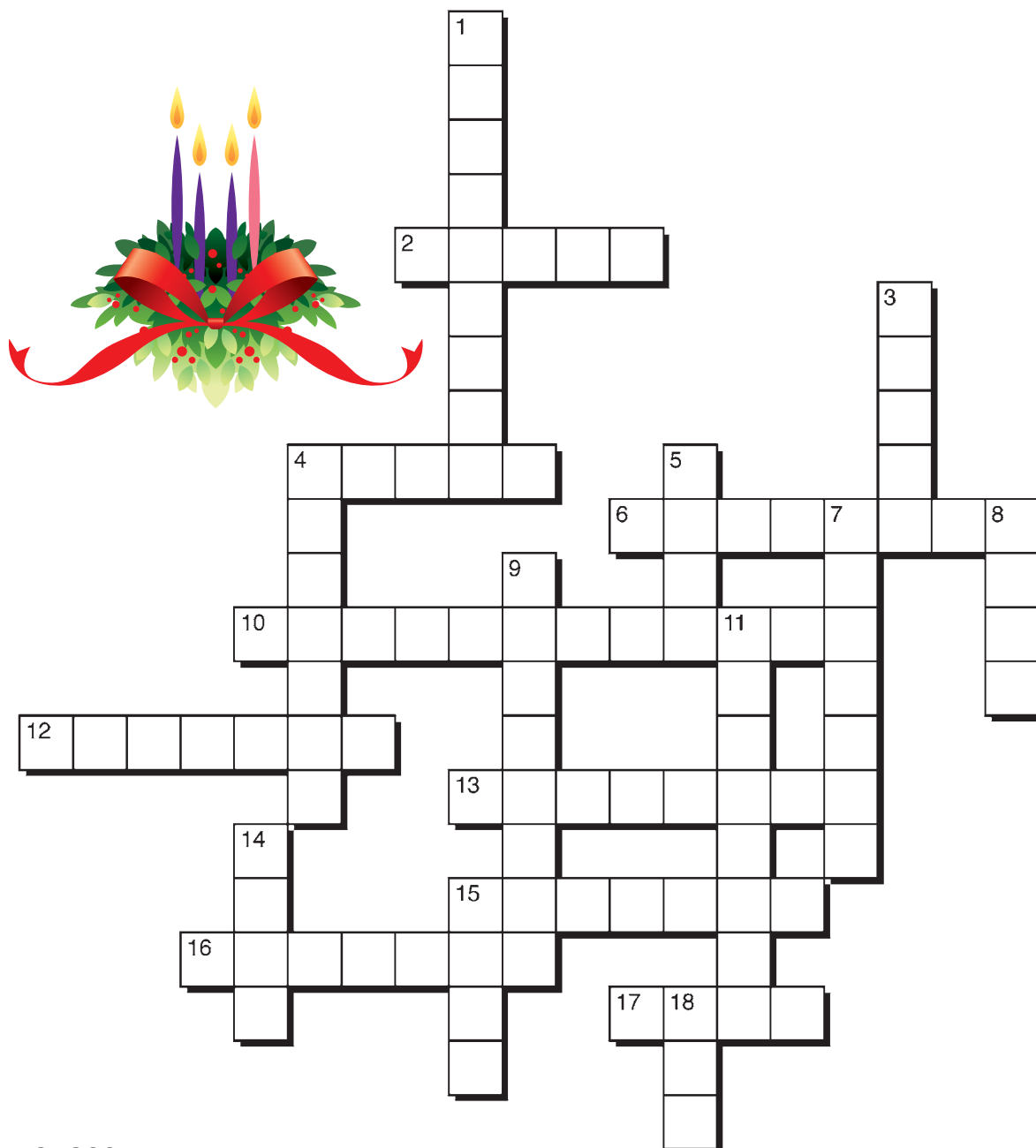
Information about the congregation and the positions is available at [www.gracechurchcalgary.com/MinisterSearches/](http://www.gracechurchcalgary.com/MinisterSearches/)



## SMILES

### Crossword

Get into the Christmas spirit with our Yuletide-themed puzzle!



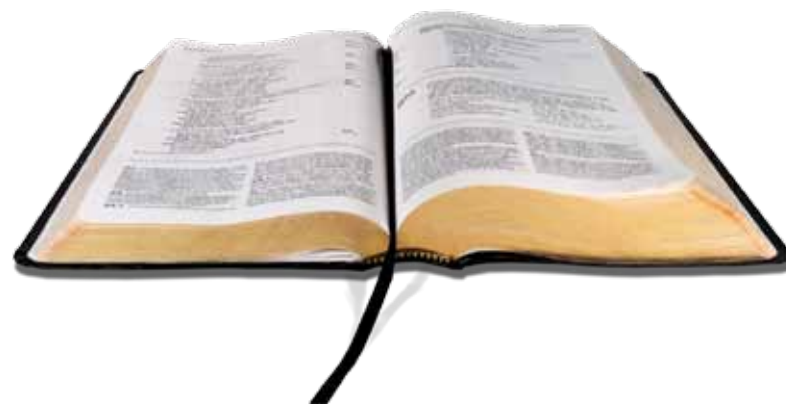
#### ACROSS

2. The gift of \_\_\_\_\_ is an embalming oil, symbolizing death.
4. Referring to Christmas as "Xmas" has a long history, as the "X" refers to the first letter of Christ's name in \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Who was emperor of the Roman Empire when Christ was born?
10. As a standard gift for a king in the ancient world, \_\_\_\_\_ is a perfume or incense.
12. "All ye faithful" in Latin: *Adeste* \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Saint \_\_\_\_\_ is credited as the originator of the Christmas tree in Germany.
15. In which Gospel do astrologers from the East visit the Christ Child?
16. In 1223, Saint \_\_\_\_\_ of Assisi arranged the first nativity scene.
17. The Gospel of Mark opens with the story of \_\_\_\_\_ the Baptist.

#### DOWN

1. The shape of a \_\_\_\_\_ is symbolic of Jesus as the shepherd of man.
3. To escape from Herod, a messenger of the Lord told Jesus' family to flee for safety to where?
4. The name of the angel who visited Mary.
5. In which Gospel do shepherds visit the Christ Child?
7. This first Christian martyr is remembered on December 26: Saint \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Hymn: "Hope is a \_\_\_\_\_."
9. This fourth-century bishop was known for secret gift-giving: Saint \_\_\_\_\_.
11. The town in Galilee where the Gospel of Luke says Jesus grew up.
14. "In the beginning was the \_\_\_\_\_."
15. "Now the holly bears a berry as white as the \_\_\_\_\_."
18. How many angels spoke the good news to the shepherds?

### Quotation Location: A Saviour is Born



Draw a line connecting the scripture reference with the correct quotation, then check your answers in the Bible.  
(NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION)

- |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Psalm 96:1–2 | She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.                                                                                                          |
| Luke 2:10–11 | For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.                                                                                                                                             |
| Isaiah 9:2   | O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.                                                                  |
| Titus 2:11   | But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the LORD." |
| Matthew 1:21 | The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.                                                                           |

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### CROSSWORD ANSWERS

- DOWN**
1. Candy cane
  3. Egypt
  4. Gabriel
  5. Luke
  7. Stephen
  8. Star
  9. Nicholas
  11. Nazareth
  14. Word
  15. Milk
  18. One

- ACROSS**
2. Myrrh
  4. Greek
  6. Augustus
  10. Frankincense
  12. Fideles
  13. Boniface
  15. Matthew
  16. Francis
  17. John





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