



2026 General Assembly: Listening Beyond Ourselves



Commissioners, guests and staff at the 2026 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, attended by an equal number of ministers and elders who are commissioned by presbyteries. General Assembly takes place annually, and the Assembly votes on matters of theology and polity that affect the denomination. The Assembly receives, discusses and makes decisions on reports from committees, petitions, overtures, references and appeals. Some issues require study over several years. The General Assembly elects a moderator—a minister or elder—who presides over the Assembly and continues in an inspirational and ceremonial role until the next year's gathering.

By Callie Long, *Communications*

The most compelling conversations at the 151st General Assembly did not always happen at a mi-

crophone on the Assembly floor. At times, they came from guests who asked commissioners not to debate but to listen. Over four days, Indigenous leaders, ecu-

menical partners and practitioners on the front lines of mission shared stories that broadened the Assembly's understanding of God's work in the world. Their presentations threaded quietly throughout the week, reminding commissioners that discernment begins with paying attention to voices beyond our own and encouraging us to listen beyond ourselves and engage more broadly in ministry. This unfolded as the Assembly, meeting at York University in Toronto, Ont., moved

through a full agenda of reports, recommendations and decisions.

Ecumenical and interfaith guests: A church connected across borders

The Assembly welcomed ecumenical partners and interfaith visitors, whose greetings reflected decades of shared ministry and mutual respect. They were reminders that Canadian Presbyterians belong to a global Christian family navigating many of the same questions—of justice, identity, stability and faithful presence—in vastly different contexts. The testimonies were sometimes unsettling, yet always encouraging. Central to the presentations was a shared conviction: that every person bears the image of God. Far from abstract, this theological claim carries practical implications for public witness,

justice and neighbourly care.

A searing image of red ribbons

One of the most striking images of the week came from Indigenous leader Jim Bear Jacobs, who connected contemporary immigration enforcement in Minneapolis to the historic legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery.

Describing the thousands of red ribbons tied to the fence around an ICE detention centre in the city—one for each detained person—Jacobs saw them as a visible sign of presence and lament, and urged commissioners to recognize a moral responsibility and stand in solidarity with those rendered invisible or forgotten.

The image lingered long after his presentation.

Continued on page 4



The Toronto Vaughan Korean Church Choir at opening worship.

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Hope and Possibility Continue



By the Rev. Lara Scholey

"O Breath of life, come sweeping through us; revive your church with life and power... kindle the flame of love among us, and fit your church to meet this hour."
Book of Praise #384, portions v.1, 4

Yeast growing in bread dough that will nourish, a tiny mustard seed growing into a bush offering shelter, dry bones that live becoming an unexpected, vibrant community—hope and possibility is found in Presbyterian churches across Canada.

A congregation partners with community members who enjoy

making soup. These food donations are included in their monthly luncheon for locals who are food insecure. A church can no longer provide an after-school program and now sends 10 kids to a local Presbyterian summer camp. A congregation has fewer people on a Sunday morning, but during the week it is buzzing as a community hub with kids, youth and adults of all ages. Worship is enriched by a choral group in which members opt in and out, depending on the time of year, and they sing occasionally and for special seasons, depending on people's availability. As they are short-term commitments, community members who take voice lessons in the building, and who just like to sing, sometimes join the group. Churches are realizing that through partnership and in being flexible, we are enabled by God's grace, to do so much more than we are able to do on our own.

Hope and possibility continue, with God's help, as we seek to be faithful in *this* time and in *this* place, and with the resources we have in *this* moment.

At General Assembly, I was so encouraged by the Young Adult Representative (YARs) and theological student representa-



Young Adult Representatives at the 2026 General Assembly.

tives. They were articulate and engaged, creating thoughtful motions and amendments after long discussions about AI and MAID, among other topics.

In addition to carrying out the work of the church, the power of coming together at General Assembly is that we learn from other churches, specialized ministries, elders and ministers. We also learn from ecumenical visitors; and we learn about the many resources available to us in the PCC.

As I continue this moderatorial year, I hope to hear more stories of challenge, yes, but also stories of hope. There is no moment of hope too small for the God known to us in Jesus who met, healed and restored to community one person at a time. He served in a time of occupation and darkness for people. Yet, he lifted up a mustard seed, described the effects of yeast, understood a prodigal son and praised a woman seeking one lost coin. In this new way of seeing the world, Jesus gave us a glimpse of how we may learn to value what God values, and how we may bring about God's dream for the world.

If we trust that God gives us what we need to be the church, here, now, what does that church look like?

At the end of June, I spent time with Presbyterian military chaplains from across the country—reserve force and regular force. They carry out their ministry, primarily of pastoral care and presence, with one foot in the church and the other foot in the military as they care for all. It is not the easiest place to ask for help, and not the easiest place to show vulnerability. One of the many questions we pondered in small groups was this: "Where am I relying on competence to avoid vulnerability? Or where am I relying on my own effort and determination to avoid vulnerability?"

Friends, we have much to offer, but it may require us to be vulnerable, as we seek to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God. May we steward well our many gifts of talents, money, property and people power, and may we see abundance rather than scarcity. In particular, our communities of faith have been generously entrusted with people ready to serve, given to us by the God who calls us into ministry, even if it will look different than it did before.

One of my favourite parts of serving the church is when someone asks another person to serve in a new way, and that person blossoms, grows and enjoys sharing their unique gifts with their community of faith.

In *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, author Rachel Naomi Remen writes, "When you help, you see life as weak. When you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole."

We need helpers and fixers, but how may we support one another and enable one another to truly serve? Through all the challenge of this time, may we trust that the Spirit moves—breathing life into our church, and kindling the flame of love.

*Gracious God,
Let us look expectantly to a new day, with new joys and new possibilities, as we seek to serve you. Amen.*



The Rev. Lara Scholey (second from left) was installed as Moderator of the 2026 General Assembly, pictured here with the 2025 Moderator, the Rev. Jeffrey Murray (far right).

AI and the Non-consensual, Exploitative Alteration of Images

By Allyson Carr, Justice Ministries

*Content warning:
discussion of sexual violence*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is quickly shaping the world and human lives and relationships in ways we have not yet begun to understand the depth and breadth of. There are many ways in which this is happening. The heat that AI data centres put out helps drive climate change; the water those data centres consume is also deeply troubling and significantly impacts ecosystems; concerns are being raised about what AI is doing to critical thinking (how reliant are people becoming on having answers given to them instead of processing information and questions themselves). The ways in which AI can increase mis- and dis-information is also becoming more apparent; questions about how it learns and around privacy and whether it is too sycophantic are all also pressing. Increasingly, it is being used to create more sophisticated scams, leaving people and institutions (including congregations) targeted by these scams vulnerable to serious financial loss. Finally, people are feeding it intimate details of their lives, including information regarding relationships, medical issues, personal anxieties, and financial or legal data. What happens to that information? Where is it stored? Who has access to it? What does AI learn from it and how (and by whom) is that used?

These are all urgent issues to raise and to educate people about. One problem that has received less attention than it should, is how some AI platforms, such as (but not limited to) Grok, have enabled the alteration of everyday mundane photos of people into non-consensual sexualized or even pornographic images. At General Assembly this year, an additional motion was brought to the floor, and adopted, that the church should take a strong public stand against the use of AI tools (like Grok) that have been used to create nonconsensual sexual images of individuals, including children. That AI would be used to exploit people in this way is relatively new, but the sexual



exploitation of people—including children—in nonconsensual ways is certainly not new.

After public outcry, Grok's parent company xAI made changes meant to disable the ability of users to alter images in this way—but not before significant harm had been done. (Also, not before several countries, including Canada, announced they would launch investigations). It is unclear how much follow-through there will be on the promised ongoing internal oversight with regards to ethical issues such as this, and so it remains vital to continue to hold corporations that have allowed exploitation to account.

It is important to be clear and blunt in this regard: altering an image to make it sexualized or using a tool to keep a person's face but replace their clothed body with an AI-generated nude or only partly clothed body that looks like them is an insidious form of sexual assault. The ability to control how much of your body is seen or touched is a vital part of human agency and safety. In the absence of a caregiver role that is legitimately involved in caring for a person incapable of caring for their own body in that mo-

ment (for any number of reasons: age, disability, injury) removing someone's clothes without their explicit consent, whether digitally or physically, is a violation that assaults the dignity of the person. Digital violation of this type can be hard to recover from as images can be replicated and spread. Spreading these false images rejects a person's agency, their boundaries, and tells them and others that they don't matter. Non-consensual sexual images are also a new assault every time someone else sees the image. Such images often spread quickly and are hard to have taken down.

What has the church said?

In addition to speaking out against issues such as sexual exploitation and human trafficking, the church has a lengthy history of speaking out against businesses or corporations with exploitative practices. While much of the church's previous advocacy on corporate exploitation has been on issues involving workers' rights or mining practices that threaten communities, allowing one's AI tool to be used in ways that create non-consensual sexualized images is also an exploitative cor-

porate practice, and must not be tolerated. As early as 1981, the church affirmed that as part of its mission it has a role in promoting the social responsibility of business corporations and other economic institutions, including a right and duty to encourage these institutions to consider the full impact of their operations on the well-being of the communities they affect (A&P 1981, 311). In 2003, General Assembly adopted a recommendation that the Moderator write to and recommend that the Government of Canada bring forward legislation governing corporate activity in countries where human rights are systematically violated (A&P 2003, 322, 15). Calls are increasing for more oversight of AI tools even now, for a variety of reasons.

Living Faith reminds us that justice requires protecting the rights of others, fair laws must be justly administered, and that justice protests against everything that destroys human dignity (8.4.3 & 5). It is important to continue pressing for oversight of how and when AI is being used, and that in all we do—and in all the tools we use—we ensure people are treated with dignity and respect.

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

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Moderator of the General Assembly:

The Rev. Lara Scholey

The national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada is on the traditional territory of the Wendat, the Anishinaabeg and the Haudenosaunee nations. These lands are part of the Toronto Purchase Treaty, No. 13, held by the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Williams Treaties and the Dish with One Spoon Wampum.



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



Commissioners voting at General Assembly.

Continued from page 1

Quoting Catholic theologian and Jesuit priest Fr. James Keenan, Jacobs noted that “the greater sin is not only when we are weak and struggling, but when we are powerful and cannot be bothered.” For him, as an Indigenous person, the ribbons symbolize more than protest, they signify a declaration that those treated as disposable remain seen by God and by communities committed to justice. Naming the Doctrine of Discovery as a theological framework that helped justify colonial systems by deciding “who is human and who is not,” Jacobs said that the doctrinal legacy continues to shape systems that devalue Indigenous lives and those of other marginalized communities. Therefore, the ribbons represented not only symbols of protest but also of moral insistence: that people are not disposable and that systems that treat them as such must be named, confronted and transformed.

A voice from across the church’s boundaries

If Jacobs pointed to public witness and justice, Subdeacon Dr. Brian A. Butcher of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops drew on a broader ecumenical imagination, reflecting on his formation across traditions. Raised as a Baptist and later attending a small Presbyterian church as a teenager, he recalled being captivated by its liturgical life. “Who are these Presbyterians? It

was so beautiful,” he said. That recollection pointed as much to personal memory as to the quiet ways Christian traditions shape one another over time.

Ecumenism, he suggested, is not only institutional cooperation but also the patient cultivation of trust across differences.

Inviting commissioners to stand and join him in chanting the Lord’s Prayer in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic tradition, he shifted the room from “parliamentary” procedure to shared prayer.

God at work in unexpected places

Another guest shifted attention to where the church is emerging outside traditional structures and forms.

UpperLVL, a ministry based in a nightclub in Nanaimo, B.C., and this year’s recipient of the Cutting Edge of Mission Award, presented a strikingly different picture of ministry. Led by DJ and student for ministry Austin Penner, the ministry reaches people beyond conventional church settings.

Penner spoke from his lived experience, naming addiction, brokenness and the slow, often difficult discovery of grace in unexpected places—not as a program description, but as a testimony of transformation. For Penner, ministry is not a strategy but accompaniment: presence with people at the edges of stability and hope. The nightclub was presented not

as a novelty but as a space where relationships already existed and where God’s presence was being discovered anew.

When UpperLVL received the award, Penner expressed gratitude, saying the recognition would “put wind in our tired team’s sails.” The moment underscored that new forms of ministry often arise from necessity rather than design.

An invitation to listen again

It is easy to view the challenges facing Canadian congregations as unique: dwindling membership, financial strain and shifting patterns of religious participation. Yet hearing from partners within and beyond Canada offered a broader perspective. Across presentations—from campus ministry in Canada, Palestinian Christian witness, ecumenical development in Nepal and international chaplaincy care—a shared invitation emerged: listen again. Listen, not passively, but as a faithful practice that resists simplification and attends more carefully to voices that are often silenced.

The Rev. Tim Kennedy, who leads the Ecumenical Campus Chaplaincy at the University of Toronto, described how ministry has been shaped by post-pandemic student loneliness. In response, the chaplaincy has focused on grief support and informal community and student-led initiatives that foster belonging and spiritual exploration. “Listening” here is pastoral and relational—attending to identity, grief and doubt as central to faith formation.

PCC international mission staff deepened this perspective. The Rev. Lora Nafziger described her work in Nepal, where poverty is understood not only as economic lack but as the result of intersecting social, structural and environmental pressures, including migration and historical isolation. Through United Mission to Nepal, ecumenical partners pro-

vide medical, developmental and spiritual care, with staff care and mental health support as essential components.

Representatives from the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, Nader Anton Abuamsha and Deacon Bassem Thabet turned their attention to Palestine-Israel. Referencing the Nakba (meaning “catastrophe”) and the harsh reality facing Palestinian Christians, they described communities that are both resilient and increasingly endangered. They challenged commissioners to move beyond abstractions, saying that solidarity must be embodied in attention to the lives shaped by occupation, restrictions and intergenerational fear.

Taken together, these four testimonies resist simplified narratives about faith, poverty or conflict. They reframe listening as a faithful discipline of presence: attending to grief without rushing to resolution; to injustice without abstraction; and to faith as a lived reality rather than an institutional claim. The invitation they offer is not only to hear these stories once, but to listen again and allow that renewed attention to shape response, solidarity and responsibility.

Appreciation for faith in service

The Assembly took a moment to recognize Karen Plater, retiring after 30 years as associate secretary for Stewardship in the Life and Mission Agency, for her diligent, faithful and long service to the church. Many Presbyterians got to know Karen over the years, especially through webinars designed to equip leaders in both stewardship and financial management (treasurer) skills. Karen has cultivated many friendships, connecting with people across Canada and around the world through her work, and she looks forward to using those re-

lationships in the advancement of God’s mission in new ways.

Not diversions, but the business of the church

By the end of the week of meetings, commissioners had made decisions that would shape the denomination’s future. There were important discussions about: Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID); the depth and breadth of our ecumenism in the form of welcoming—or not—ministers from other traditions to celebrate the sacraments; the church’s budgets; formation for ministry in the church’s colleges; ministry with Indigenous people; Christian nationalism; Christian Zionism; AI; and the church’s mission in the world through important ministries like camping. The Assembly’s decisions are recorded in the Acts and Proceedings and are available at presbyterian.ca/aandp. The actions that Sessions, presbyteries, synods and committees are to take as a result of the Assembly’s decisions are circulated to each body.

Some of the most lasting impressions from this year’s Assembly were not tied to motions or votes. They were tied to images: red ribbons on a fence, a prayer sung across traditions, a nightclub transformed into a place of ministry, and ecumenical guests describing friendships spanning denominations and decades. These were not diversions from the church’s business. They were and are reminders of its scope.

The ecumenical conversations of the week affirmed that the church does not discern in isolation, but in conversation with scripture and voices that have the potential to unsettle assumptions. It is a reminder that the church is strongest when it intentionally recognizes that it belongs to something larger than itself.

Updates from the 2026 General Assembly are available at presbyterian.ca/ga2026.



Jim Bear Jacobs



Subdeacon Dr. Brian A. Butcher



Austin Penner, UpperLVL



Deacon Bassem Thabet



Karen Plater



Young Adult Representatives at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, with the Rev. Robert Hayashi (left) and Susan Johnson, clerk of Session (right).



Commissioners at the 2026 General Assembly.

Stewardship and General Assembly

*By the Rev. Corrie Stewart,
Stewardship, and minister
at St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church in North River Bridge,
Cape Breton Island, N.S.*

This year's General Assembly was the fourth time I had the responsibility and privilege of serving as a commissioner from the Presbytery of Cape Breton. Like all commissioners, I diligently reviewed the reports and followed the business of the Assembly carefully; however, this year I saw the business of the gathering through a different lens. As the PCC's new associate secretary for Stewardship, I was thinking about General Assembly business from a stewardship perspective in general and a Presbyterians Sharing perspective in particular.

The stewardship of funds gifted through Presbyterians Sharing supports the planning, preparation and implementation of our Assembly each year. This includes the work of committees throughout the year, travel and accommodation for all attendees, and compensation for all staff of the national office. While these costs are administrative in nature and likely seem rather mun-

dane to some, it is important to note the necessity of having GA for our collective discernment in the ministry and mission of the PCC. The programs and mission of our church could not be delivered without the work of the national staff. There is great value in the church coming together each year to discern its ongoing ministry and mission.

Presbyterians Sharing supports programs and missions within Canada and throughout the world. Some Presbyterians are not aware that their gifts to Presbyterians Sharing support international missions. Presbyterians Sharing supports the stipends of international mission staff, while Presbyterian World Service & Development funds international programs that are delivered by partners. The Rev. Lora Nafziger, one of the mission staff partially funded through Presbyterians Sharing, presented at GA. She spoke about the work she is doing in Nepal, where she serves as staff care and counselling advisor with United Mission to Nepal (UMN). She provides spiritual and emotional support to all expatriate UMN staff and some Nepali staff, which encourages personal and

team growth.

The report of the Life and Mission Agency delivered to this year's GA speaks to a significant amount of program and mission work supported by Presbyterians Sharing. This work includes production of resources for worship, updating of policies and procedures, preparation and delivery of webinars, production of the *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper, provision of various grants, advocacy initiatives through justice

ministries, and running the ministry candidacy process. Presbyterians Sharing provides grants for programs including regional resourcing, ministry, ministries with Indigenous people, new congregational development, and renewing and specialized ministry. There were some unique grants to congregations this year, such as: providing funds to replace front doors on church buildings; replacing roofs; and the purchase of a generator, allowing a congregation to become a warming station during power outages.

This is some of the work that you are doing through your gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. We are grateful for your ongoing generosity and commitment. For the first time in several years there was an increase in the amount contributed to Presbyterians Shar-

ing in 2025. The amount given by congregations and individuals increased, which demonstrates your faithfulness to the ministry and mission of the PCC.

In the role of associate secretary for Stewardship, I hope to meet many people throughout the PCC. I am available for presentations about stewardship and Sunday supply with a stewardship theme. Should your synod, presbytery or congregation wish to learn more about stewardship, Presbyterians Sharing or various ways to provide gifts to the church, including planned giving, please reach out to me at 1-800-619-7301 ext. 273 or cstewart@presbyterian.ca.



Morning worship.

History Book Awards

Every year, the History Committee honours history books with awards in three categories: congregational, academic and memoirs. This year, the awards went to:

Stuart Macdonald for *Tradition and Tension: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1945–1985*; Tom Carter for *Doctor Sahib and Me: Two Years as a Missionary Family in India*; Angus Sutherland, Arminta Carmichael, Lois Rooney-Giurin, M.J. Perry, Ian MacCready and Taras Broadhead for *Fifty Years of Harmony: A History of Presbyterian Music Camp*.

Honourable mentions went to: Graydon Dougald Boyes for *St. David's Presbyterian Church 1889–2024*; Tim Reddish for *Recollections & Reflections: A Missionary Kid's African Experiences*.

Congratulations to all recipients!



History Committee member Robert Dean with Tom Carter, Angus Sutherland and Stuart Macdonald.

Grace Presbyterian Stampede Breakfast

By Andrew Manuel,
Grace Presbyterian Church
in Calgary, Alta.

Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., was filled with energy, laughter and community spirit as more than 800 people gathered for this year's Grace Stampede Breakfast.

Held during the Calgary Stampede season, the free community event welcomed neighbours, friends, families, church members and first-time visitors for a morning of delicious food, live music, games, tours and connection. From the moment guests arrived, a lively, welcoming atmosphere filled the church grounds, with people of all ages enjoying the morning together.

More than 50 volunteers helped bring the event to life. They served in many areas, including setup, hospitality, children's activities, prize stations, church tours, music support, cleanup and welcoming guests throughout the morning. Their care and dedication made a visible difference, helping guests feel welcomed and supported.

The event had the feel of a



The many volunteers at the Grace Stampede Breakfast.

neighbourhood block party. Guests enjoyed breakfast, listened to live music, explored the historic church building on guided tours and participated in family-friendly activities. Children enjoyed games and prizes, while many visitors had the chance to meet people from Grace, ask questions and connect with the surrounding community.

For Grace, the Stampede

Breakfast is more than a seasonal celebration. It is an opportunity to open the doors wide, build relationships with neighbours and offer a genuine expression of welcome. This year's strong attendance was an encouraging reminder of the church's connection to the community and the importance of creating spaces where people can gather, celebrate and feel at home.

The success of the morning reflected months of planning and the collective effort of many people. Events of this scale would not be possible without volunteers willing to serve both behind the scenes and on the day itself. Grace is deeply grateful to everyone who volunteered, attended, invited friends and helped make the morning such a success.

As the church reflects on this

year's breakfast, there is much to celebrate: more than 800 people were welcomed, countless conversations were shared and a joyful morning of community connection was had. Grace Presbyterian Church looks forward to building on this year's success as planning begins for next year's Stampede Breakfast, with the hope of welcoming even more neighbours from the community.



Intro to "What Does the Bible Say About...?" Series

By Dr. Lee Johnson,
Education Program Coordinator

As a professor of the Bible, one of the most common questions I receive is, "What does the Bible say about...?" any given action, issue or topic. Most times, the query is posed with the expectation that the Bible speaks against an idea or action and that the Bible is unequivocal in its stance. So, the questioner seeks a quick confirmation of their held belief, which can then be relayed with my "authoritative" backing

to whomever holds an opposing view. Virtually none of these questioners leaves our conversation with the simple security that they had sought. In fact, I took to prefacing these conversations with, "I can tell you the biblical views, but I doubt if you will like the answer to your question." As is true of any work of art, the Bible is not simplistic, and it compels ongoing engagement from its readers and interpreters.

Inspired by my experiences with these questions, a new series for adult education will launch

this fall called "What Does the Bible Say About...?" that includes an online discussion and study materials. Register today for one of the upcoming sessions at presbyterian.ca/what-does-the-bible-say-about.

September 23: Jesus' Miracles

An exploration of the remarkable activities of Jesus reported in different ways by the four gospels, with attention to the cultural context and impact of Jesus' actions.

October 7: Satan and the Devil

A discussion about the views of the person and work of Satan/the devil and across the Hebrew Bible and through the New Testament writings.

October 21: Hell and Heaven

Exploring the views and language about the afterlife in the biblical writings.

November 4: The Return of Jesus

Interpreting the passages in which Jesus' return is referenced in the New Testament.

November 18: The End Times

Compare the New Testament visions of the last days of life before the in-breaking of God.

December 2: Jesus' Family

Fleshing out the clues in the New Testament about Jesus' heritage, parents and siblings.

February 3: Baptism

A discussion of the ritual and meaning of baptism in the time of Jesus and the early church.

Remembering the Rev. Dr. Ian S. Wishart



Ian at a special House of Assembly awards ceremony.

By Corinne King, elder, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in St. John's, N.L.

On February 25, 2026, the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in St. John's, N.L., lost an icon of the national denomination. We lost a faithful servant and friend in the passing of the Rev. Dr. Ian S. Wishart.

Ian was an intelligent man of deep faith and a man of many accomplishments. His ministry at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church ("The Kirk") is what brought him

and his wife Jean to St. John's in 1972. Although he retired in 1998, it is a ministry from which he did not leave.

He was a prolific writer, penning many poems and reflections. He was very involved in the development of the PCC's *Living Faith* statement of belief and even reflected on key sections on local radio station VOWR in the late '90s.

He spent a lifetime associated with the Canadian Armed Forces, from his days as a Naval Cadet at Royal Roads Military College through his days at HMCS Queen, the 48th Highlanders, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and the Newfoundland Militia District. Subsequently, he had been the Chaplain to Branch 56 Royal Canadian Legion and to the Royal Canadian Legion Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Command. From this, he was known to many as "The War Memorial Guy."

He took great pleasure in his involvement in the first St. Andrew's Scout group, the Caribou group of the St. John's Rotary



Members of the St. Andrew's Auxiliary of the Atlantic Mission Society with the late Rev. Dr. Ian Wishart (centre).

Club, and his membership in the Crow's Nest and the Royal Canadian Military Institute.

All accomplishments aside, there was something about his voice when he was in the pulpit—his intonation and cadence; a confident, firm, reassuring, comforting timbre that made you feel every word deeply in your heart. He never lost that talent, as witnessed during his prayers at the Remembrance Day services at the War Memorial right up to this past November.

In recent years, his tenacity and drive to keep going, regardless of his declining physical health, were legendary. He was fiercely independent and wanted to continue to contribute—whether it was putting the buns together for a Lobster Dinner or helping wash

dishes after our last AGM.

We will always cherish the memories we have of Ian. We are deeply grateful for his life and

dedication to God and our congregation and find great comfort in having known him. Rest in peace, kind and faithful servant.



Ian at a Remembrance Day event at the St. John's War Memorial.

Community Champions

By Ainsley Chapman, executive director, Evangel Hall Mission in Toronto, Ont.

This spring, Evangel Hall Mission (EHM) in Toronto, Ont., was awarded a Community Champion Award from the City of Toronto and United Way. What makes this especially impactful is that we were nominated by a peer organization that has been watching us grow and adapt over the years and has seen us respond to the changing needs of the community.

This award celebrates the extraordinary contributions of local organizations that support the

health, well-being and resilience of Toronto residents. It recognizes organizations that build partnerships that strengthen neighbourhoods and communities in meaningful ways; forge deep connections within the areas they serve to make significant positive change; and work in tandem with residents and other community-based organizations under a shared vision to develop and coordinate programs, services, and resources to address unique neighbourhood and community needs.

EHM is proud and privileged to be an agency through which Presbyterians can live their faith



David Reycraft, Shaizad Merchant, Karen Plater, Jearaldine Gargoles, Ainsley Chapman, Francois Sealy, Neve Adams and Brock Winterton.

and be the hands, feet and heart of Christ. We are only able to do this because of the many ways that we have been supported by Presbyterians near and far.

Whether it is through safe housing, a hot meal, a welcoming smile, or human connection, we offer unconditional love, welcome and support to all who come to

our doors because of you. It is in this spirit that we invite you to share in this award, because we are ALL Evangel Hall Mission. We do this work, together.



Photos from the 150th anniversary service.

150 Years in Selkirk

*By the Rev. Naggie Sterling,
Knox Presbyterian Church
in Selkirk, Man.*

The congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Selkirk, Man., has been celebrating our 150th anniversary since January. A new event has been held each month to mark this significant milestone.

In January, we held a trivia night, which was a sold-out event and an evening of fun and laughter. In February, we held a Valentine's Tea Party. This was a free event that was open to the community and included a presenta-

tion by the RCMP on living safely.

In March, there was a St. Patrick's Day potluck dinner. In April, we had our annual Good Friday Breakfast, and in May (our anniversary month), we had the inaugural staging of the "Knox Your Sox Off" 5km run/2km walk, which was a big success. The following day we held the 150th anniversary service and luncheon, both of which were a full house. Events will continue throughout the year, including a Texas Scramble Golf Tournament, a Steve Bell concert, a homecoming service and a memorial service.



The "Knox Your Sox Off" 5km run/2km walk event. PHOTO CREDITS: NICOLETTE BRISCOE-STERLING



Supporting Palestinian Children

*By the Rev. Jeffrey Murray,
Moderator of the 2025
General Assembly*

During my trip to Palestine and Israel, as part of the Moderator's visit, it was easy to feel overwhelmed and helpless to do anything that could be useful as the conditions and restrictions of the occupation were relayed to us. It left one to wonder, what one can do. From day one we heard calls for support for children and education. Without education, children become depressed. Aspirations, dreams and hopes fade, causing lasting harm to children and to Palestinian society.

Combatants for Peace, a non-violent grassroots movement of Israelis and Palestinians, reported that large sums of tax revenues

collected from Palestine by Israel have been withheld since 2023. They reported: "These funds have historically sustained basic public services, including education. With nearly eight billion shekels blocked, schools are struggling to function. Teachers are not receiving full salaries, school years have been postponed, and many classrooms now operate on a reduced schedule simply because there is no money to keep them open."

Under international law, every child has the right to education, even under occupation. However, in the West Bank, Palestinian children are going to school only three days a week instead of five. It is estimated that education for around 808,000 children in the West Bank is disrupted due to access restrictions and disruption

to schooling.

As Palestinian organizations and individuals repeatedly asked for help with education, this was echoed during our visit with the United Nations World Food Programme in East Jerusalem. They persuaded us to help, saying, "Anything you can do to help advocate for learning and recreation for young people in your circles is essential. This matter is lost in translation, but this is something you could do. This is so important and it is nowhere in the picture. Use your networks and churches. The churches here work with many congregations and networks to support the people and for whatever reason, the Israelis are more likely to say yes to churches even though they say no to the UN."



PHOTO CREDIT: DEPARTMENT OF SERVICE TO PALESTINIAN REFUGEES (DSPR)

To support children in Palestine, the PCC's Gifts of Change catalogue (inserted in this newspaper) now offers the **Education for Palestinian Christian Children** project.

A donation of \$50 helps children with the transportation costs associated with going to a school, \$75 covers tuition for one week for a child, and \$150 supports a child's total expenses.

Visit presbyterian.ca/giftsofchange

Bringing the Youth Voice to a Season of Change

By Maeve Forde, member of the Change Leadership Team

When General Assembly appointed the Change Leadership Team as a Special Commission, the mandate before us was both exhilarating and daunting. Tasked with recommending pathways to shift our denomination into an attitude of openness with hope and possibility, the team's deliverables touched every foundational pillar of our church, from restructuring our courts and redesigning models of ministry to implementing a robust lay leadership program.

I attended the General Assembly of the PCC in June 2025 as a Young Adult Representative (YAR). As the framework for this team was being established, a vital motion was put forward on the floor by one of the YARs: a directive to ensure that a youth voice was intentionally added to this Special Commission. By August of 2025, I received the formal invitation to join. I was deeply honoured, not just by the invitation itself, but by what it represented: a deliberate, structural commitment to making sure the future of the church is shaped by those who

are emerging leaders in it.

Stepping into an established committee could have been intimidating, but my experience was exactly the opposite. I am grateful to the members who were on the team before me. From the moment I arrived, they welcomed me with open arms, instantly making me feel like a peer rather than an outsider. Navigating the complexities of denominational governance has a steep learning curve, and the team has shown immense patience, leadership and mentorship as I learn as we go. Their guidance has not only helped me find my footing but has given me the confidence to speak up, knowing my perspective is truly valued.

Sitting at the table as a young adult amid these massive, structural conversations is a profound privilege, but it also comes with a unique weight. Often, in institutional settings, "youth representation" can feel symbolic, like a checkbox to ensure a demographic is technically included. But on this commission, the experience is entirely different. To



Maeve Ford.

step into a two-year mandate aimed at modernizing operations, supporting local communities and reimagining the very structure of The Presbyterian Church in Canada requires more than just a seat at the table—it requires a bold, active voice.

Being the youth voice in a season of urgent change means constantly bridging the gap between honouring our rich heritage and looking fearlessly toward the future. While the commission navigates complex structural deliverables, like designing shared services for human resources, technology, and legal management, or proposing a revised structure for the 2027 General Assembly, my focus is often drawn to what these changes mean for the generations to come. How do we ensure that a restruc-

tured church is an *emboldened* church? How do we build a community that doesn't just try to survive, but actively takes risk for the sake of the gospel?

Young people today are looking for authenticity, collaboration and a church that is actively "sent" out into the world. We don't just want to manage an institution; we want to be part of a living body of Christ that animates hope. When we talk about reclaiming the "priesthood of all believers" and strengthening Christian formation for lay people, I see a direct pathway for empowering young adults who are eager to lead but might not see themselves in traditional, clerical roles.

This work is an exercise in resurrection hope. It requires us to listen deeply through upcoming surveys, focus groups and regional conversations, while trusting that the Holy Spirit is breathing something new into our community.

Serving on this Special Commission has shown me that our church is truly ready for revitalizing change. As a young voice on this team, my prayer is that we continue to cast our nets on the other side, leaning into the discomfort of transformation, and build a flexible, modern and faithful church that can confidently answer Christ's call for generations to come.



Maeve at the 2025 General Assembly in June.

Busy Bees Making a Difference in Burlington

By the Rev. Mike Aldred, Brant Hills Presbyterian Church in Burlington, Ont.

At Brant Hills Presbyterian Church in Burlington, the Busy Bees are proving that small acts of kindness can have a big impact.

True to their name, members of the Busy Bees women's group have been hard at work preparing bags of essential supplies for women and families living in temporary housing. Filled with practical items needed for daily life, these bags are more than just

supplies—they are reminders that someone cares.

For those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, life can often feel uncertain and isolating. Yet every person deserves dignity, respect and the assurance that they have not been forgotten. A simple gift bag may seem like a small gesture, but it communicates an important message: you matter, and you are worthy of kindness.

The Busy Bees understand that making a difference does not always require grand programs or



The Busy Bees at Brant Hills Presbyterian Church.

large donations. Sometimes it begins with willing hands, caring hearts and a commitment to serving others. By taking the time to prepare these care packages, they are helping to bring comfort and encouragement to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

This effort reflects the mis-

sion of Brant Hills Presbyterian Church: "Happily Sharing God's Love." The congregation believes that faith is best expressed through action and that God's love becomes visible when people choose to care for their neighbours.

The Busy Bees remind us that changing the world often starts

with simple acts of compassion. Whether it is packing a bag, offering a smile or extending a helping hand, every act of love has value.

At Brant Hills Presbyterian Church, the message is simple: You do not have to do a lot to make a difference. Whatever you do, do it with love—and that love can transform lives.



Terry LeBlanc, keynote speaker at the Nouwen 2026 Conference.

Lessons from Henri Nouwen

By Joseph Sinasac,
project coordinator,
Nouwen 2026 Conference

Suddenly he was gone. Henri Nouwen, one of the most widely admired spiritual writers of his time, died unexpectedly of a heart attack 30 years ago. His passing sent shockwaves around the world among Christians and spiritual seekers of all stripes, who had turned to the Dutch Catholic priest's writing for spiritual solace.

Now, three decades later, it could be argued that what Henri Nouwen shared with the world—deep, personal reflections drawn from a life of prayer, discernment and active involvement with everything from peacemaking to the civil rights movement—is needed more than ever.

At a time when loneliness is at epidemic levels, global peace is

increasingly tenuous and human solidarity appears at a low ebb, Nouwen's wisdom continues to offer a way to build a God-and-human-centred approach to life.

Nouwen's 39 books were translated into more than 30 languages and sold more than seven million copies. Today, his legacy lives on not only in his books but in a wide network of admirers, both academic and non-academic alike, who continue to interpret it for a new generation.

Some 250 of those seeking to integrate Nouwen's insights gathered May 14–16 at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto, Ont., and spent three days in robust reflection, discussion and discernment. The international conference, titled *Longing for Home: The Prophetic Witness of Henri Nouwen in a Wounded World*, was organized by the Henri Nouwen Society in partnership with St. Michael's.

According to Michael W. Higgins, Basilian Distinguished Fellow of Contemporary Catholic Thought at St. Michael's and co-author of two books on Nouwen, the priest's relevance today is found in his personal transparency and insatiable curiosity about the human condition.

"His spirituality is grounded in engagement with, and not retreat from, the pressing challenges that compromise our humanity," said Higgins, who delivered a keynote address at the conference on Nouwen as an antidote to global despair.

Though thoroughly grounded in his vocation as a Catholic priest, Nouwen's writing, drawing from his insights as both a psychologist as well as his pastoral calling, has found a large following among other Christian denominations.

The Rev. Dr. John Vissers, Professor of Systematic Theology at Knox College, part of the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto, presented a work-

shop at the conference on "Reading Henri Nouwen as a prophetic friend in a wounded world."

"Nouwen puts his finger on the pulse of our broken humanity with words that help us better understand ourselves, our world and our hope in God," said Vissers. "It's an enduring legacy of witness rooted in his own life and faith, which he makes accessible to all who read him."

Everyone has their favourite Nouwen book, ranging from the most famous such as *The Return of the Prodigal Son* and *The Wounded Healer* to lesser-known works that offer special insight.

"An example of this for me is one of Henri's earlier, sometimes less celebrated books, *Reaching Out*," Vissers added. "It's all there, and it still speaks."

Conference attendees participated in four major plenary sessions and more than 20 workshops, as well as had opportunities for shared prayer, worship and spiritual practice.

The conference kicked off with a dramatic multi-media presentation created by Nouwen biographer Gabrielle Earnshaw. Other speakers included Carlos A. Thompson, professor of Christian Ministry and Disability Theology

at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan; Terry LeBlanc, an Indigenous Elder and educator in theology and community development with more than 48 years of experience; and Michael Blair, General Secretary of the United Church of Canada, who wrapped up the conference with a clear call to action.

Anyone engaged in pastoral ministry, theological studies or seeking to deepen their own spiritual journey will find nourishment for the mind, heart and soul in the recordings from *Longing for Home*. To access the videos, or to learn more about upcoming events with the Henri Nouwen Society, visit henrinouwen.org or email info@henrinouwen.org.



Spirit movers from L'Arche.



Glen Soderholm, worship leader.

Seuss Sunday in Coldwater

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



At St. Andrew's, Coldwater, all was delight! Seuss Sunday Number One had begun with a cheer—The first of two Sundays where Good News drew near.

Elder Aubrey Hawton led stories and song, Where the gospel and Seuss skipped happily along. No costume was needed—not one, not at all—But hats! Oh, the hats! They were splendid and tall! There were costumes and colours and whimsical flair, With smiles and glad greetings and joy everywhere.

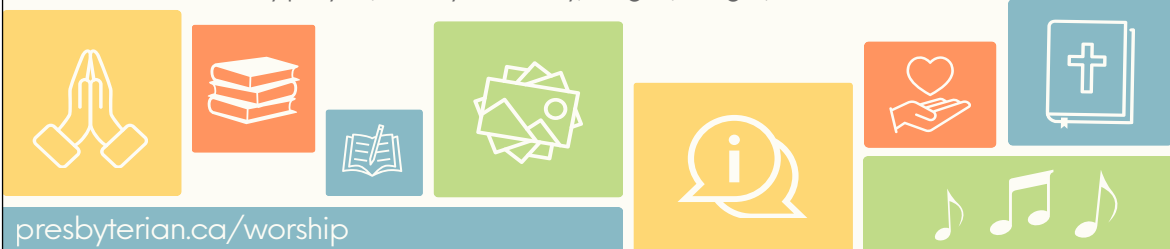
When the worship was ended, as everyone knows, There was one little duty before we could go: The traditional photo—"Everybody, say CHEESE!" (Though keeping the Cat in the Hat still isn't easy!)

Then downstairs we all wandered with laughter and chatter, Where Presbyterians proved what they know really matters: A marvellous luncheon with friends old and new—For Presbyterians love a good meal...and that's perfectly true!

What a wonderful Sunday of worship and fun, And the Seussiest journey has only begun!

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presbyterian.ca/worship

World Communion Sunday 2026

Reflections on Themes of the Liturgical Year

By Dr. Lee Johnson, Education Program Coordinator, and the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald, General Secretary

Beginning in the 1930s, World Communion Sunday has been celebrated on the first Sunday of October in churches around the world. Christians from around the globe all sitting at the table and celebrating Holy Communion on the same Sunday is a sign of the unity of Christ's church and reminder of our commitment to ecumenism.

The Lord's Supper was inaugurated by Jesus at a meal with his disciples, where he related the bread and the cup to his own body and blood and instructed them to "do this in remembrance of me" as part of their future gatherings. Following Jesus' death, the early church gatherings were structured around a shared meal and the tradition of combining dining and worship. The practice of celebrating Communion frequently, if not at every service of worship, was favoured by many 16th century reformers, yet regrettably neglected in most Presbyterian congregations today. This lapse in our current worship habits compels the church to reflect upon the benefits of more frequent celebrations of Communion in the life of the community.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is known by several names. Sometimes it is called the "Lord's Supper," reminding us that this is an intimate meal instituted by Jesus, wherein his friends and disciples are called to share fellowship and a meal with him. A clever colleague has pointed out that long before the word "Lord" referred to nobility or ruler, the word meant keeper or provider of bread. Sometimes the celebration is known as "Communion," for in this feast we

come to meet, or "commune," with Christ, who is present with us in the sacrament. The oldest name Christians have for the feast we share today is "Eucharist," which simply means "thanksgiving." Each of these sacramental titles highlights different aspects of this gathering—sustenance, community and gratitude—but they collectively affirm the goodness of God for the people of God to share.

It is significant that Jesus inaugurated a meal of remembrance for his disciples during the season of Passover, which was a time for Jews to remember their shared history of slavery in Egypt, followed by their deliverance from bondage through the actions of God, in God's chosen leader, Moses. The bittersweet memories evoked through eating bitter herbs and consuming a sacrificed animal, remind the people of God of their shared suffering and redemption. Jesus applies the same symbols of bread and wine that were prominent in the Passover meal to himself, as he describes the bread as "his body" (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19) and the cup as the "blood" of the "covenant" (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). By these words, Jesus was forever linking the gatherings of his followers within the context of the long history of Jewish remembrance and celebration of their identity as God's people who suffer and are redeemed.

In addition to the shared history that is evoked in the Lord's Supper, the meal inaugurates a symbolic social event that is easy to overlook in today's North American context. Most of the population in Jesus' day lived with the threat of starvation and an existence dominated by hunger. Each of the gospel accounts describes the ritual as taking place during



a meal (Matthew 26:26; 14:22; Luke 22:19). Paul's account in 1 Corinthians 11:23 specifically describes the bread and the cup as bookends to a meal shared by Jesus with his disciples, but Paul's letter to the Corinthians exposes the failure of the communal meal in Corinth. Some, undoubtedly the wealthy ones who did not have to labour during the day, began to eat and drink before the rest of the church members arrived. Therefore, the primary point of ensuring that all were fed was lost: "one goes hungry and another becomes drunk" (1 Corinthians 11:17–22). When Jesus commanded his followers to "do this in remembrance of me," he instituted a gathering where all received sustenance and, at least for that moment, their ever-present hunger subsided. At our communion meal we do not usually encounter people who are at risk of starvation, but sharing the Lord's Supper compels us to consider those in the world who struggle with food security.

Jesus is notorious for subverting social customs that confirmed the hierarchical structure of the Roman Empire. Rather than dining with the respectable members of Jesus' social class, he is frequently criticized for eating with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19), with those who did not follow cleansing practices (Mark 7:1–5) and including women in the dining setting (Mark 14:3–9). As participants in this meal, where we attend to the health and well-being of the church members, we ought also to attend to the health of the broader community. As theologian Daniel L. Migliore writes, "Christians cannot eat and drink at this table—where all are welcome and none goes hungry or thirsty—and continue to condone any form of

discrimination or any social or economic policy that results in hunger or other forms of deprivation" (Faith Seeking Understanding, An Introduction to Christian Theology, p. 225). Likewise, we cannot gather around the table where all are welcome and be satisfied with any form of discrimination or exclusion that prohibits others from making full claims on life. We cannot freely receive the living bread, like the freed slaves from Egypt received manna from heaven, and not seek the freedom of those who are enslaved by any power that stifles life. We cannot receive grace and refuse to grant it to others.

The loaf and the cup are the signs of Jesus' body and blood that surround the essence of life for all people—the shared meal. This vision encloses the two key elements that make us human—community and sustenance—within the brackets of Jesus' existence. So, when we eat, we share, we become community and we continue to expand those brackets to bring wholeness and humanity to all people.

The bread and wine are signs of the presence, generosity and goodness of God, spread before us. They nourish us as we look for and work to establish God's reign in this world and in our times. "Let us taste and see that the Lord is good."

Upcoming Events for Adult Education

Webinar: "The Church from the Outside"

Sunday, Sept. 16

This free online webinar will provide information on forming a movie study group, including tips for viewing, how to use the study guide, ways to spot religious references and themes in movies, and suggestions for talk about

movies and religion.
Visit presbyterian.ca/movies

"Preaching Mark: The Curious Case of Good News"

Monday, Nov. 9

Although Mark's gospel is the first known written use of the description of Jesus' life and work as "good news," this biography of Jesus is arguably the least optimistic of the four canonical gospels. This webinar identifies some of the themes, language and compositional elements of Mark's gospel and imagines a community of Jesus' followers who would compose this type of good news. A Q&A will follow the webinar, and study materials are available.

Visit presbyterian.ca/context-clues-for-preaching

New Film Study "Religion and Fate in Film"

Wednesday, Jan. 13

and Wednesday, Jan. 20

Study guides will be posted for each film. Each webinar will be followed by a Q&A.

Jan 13: Religion and fate in *Bruce Almighty*

Jan 20: Religion and fate in *The Adjustment Bureau*

Visit presbyterian.ca/movies

Presbyterians Read—Short Stories by Jesus, by Amy-Jill Levine

Wednesdays, Feb. 17, 24;
March 3, 10

Each weekly webinar includes a Q&A and study guide.

Feb 17: "Introduction to Parables and the Widow and the Judge"

Feb 24: "Leaven" and "The Mustard Seed"

March 3: "Prodigal Son" (the three lost in Luke)

March 10: "Workers in the Vineyard" and the "Good Samaritan"

Visit presbyterian.ca/read

Theological Reflections are short essays written to provoke new thought on familiar religious topics, days in the religious calendar, or current events. Designed to present a fresh take on issues of concern to the church, these writings provide food for sermons, for adult class discussions, and individual theological reflection and growth. To read additional theological reflections, visit presbyterian.ca/theological-reflections.



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The Rise of Sports Gambling Advertising



By Katharine Sisk, Justice Ministries

Since the prohibition on single-event sports gambling was removed from federal law in 2021, provincial and territorial governments have increasingly allowed the practice in their jurisdictions. As a result, gambling has increased substantially and so has the risk of harms from gambling.

Now that single-event sports gambling is permissible in many areas, gambling advertising during sporting events has drastically risen. A 2024 study by the University of Bristol found that 21.6% of the duration of the live coverage of NBA and NHL games televised in Ontario contained gambling logos, or references to gambling. And a 2026 survey, conducted by Chartered Professional Accounts Canada, reported in the weeks preceding the beginning of the FIFA World Cup that nearly 7 in ten Canadians say they encounter gambling and sports betting advertising in everyday media.

Sporting events heighten emotions by their very nature—the FIFA World Cup embodies the excitement such sporting events have for so many people—and in such a heightened state, it has been shown that people are more likely to engage in riskier behaviour. This is why companies marketing gambling target sporting events so heavily: it works.

Marketing gambling increases the chances that more people will gamble and that people who already gamble will gamble more. It has the effect of normalizing gambling and minimizing or obscuring its harms. Studies show that greater advertising exposure increases participation, which leads to a greater risk of harm. The rise of online betting has compounded the risk, and rates are rising at an alarming speed among young people in particular. A 2024 study by Greo Evidence Insights (Greo), Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) and the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) found that about one in three young adults aged 18 to 29 (32.0%) reported gambling online and that among young adults who gambled online, 69.4% met the criteria for problem gambling and 23.5% reported experiencing a high level of gambling-related harms. These numbers are deeply concerning.

What has the church said?

Due to the potential for significant harm to individual lives, families and communities, the church is opposed to gambling and lotteries (A&P 1954, pp 262, 41) and has encouraged Presbyterians to “resist the temptation to participate in government lotteries, and indeed, in all other forms of gambling” (A&P 1990, p. 250, 57).

Congregations and all courts of the church have also been urged to resist applying for and receiving funds from government foundations or agencies whose primary source of funds are revenues from gambling, as doing so is participating in gambling (A&P 2003, pp. 368, 43).

More generally, the church advocates for social policies that address human rights and the injustices of poverty and wealth inequality, both of which gambling contributes to. The church has also advocated for a guaranteed annual income, for improved social supports and for a national poverty reduction strategy.

What can you do?

If marketing a risky and potentially addictive behaviour during sporting events was prohibited, it would make a significant impact on lowering the risk of harm from gambling overall. You can write to your federal MP and raise your concerns. In June, General Assembly adopted a recommendation encouraging that Presbyterians and courts of the church take such a step. Template letters are available on the church’s Advocacy web page at presbyterian.ca/advocacy.

More about the church’s positions and statements on social justice issues can be found at presbyterian.ca/social-action.

Vacation Bible Camp for Retirees

How Three Churches Created an Adult Spiritual Retreat

By the Rev. Matt Vizzari,
Chedoke Presbyterian Church
in Hamilton, Ont.

For a few years, three Hamilton, Ont., churches have been working together to host a week of full-day Vacation Bible Camp for children. The collaboration has been working well. Every summer, 65 kids come to a church and hear about Jesus and witness how his light and love is reflected through people.

In a planning meeting one day, a request filled with longing was wistfully put forward: “We should do something like this for adults!” From that, an unexpected idea started to take root and blossom in the minds and hearts of the leadership. Eventually, the question was asked, “What would happen if we created something similar for *retired* adults?”

This simple question drew the three churches—Chedoke, Trinity and Central Presbyterian Churches—together into conversation and collaboration. Leadership, both lay and ministerial, started to work together to explore the strengths of each church, the desire that existed for something like this, and planning what a retreat would look like. All three churches laid down any feelings of competition and surrendered completely to cooperation. The retreat quickly became a shared ministry, rather than a single-church program.

The decision was made to run a four-session program over four weeks. Participants would meet every Wednesday starting at 10:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. for four consecutive weeks, starting April 15. They had the option of

signing up for all four sessions or individually, in the case that they could not make one.

It was also decided that there would be no charge to anyone who wanted to participate. The churches worked to financially fund this and received generous support from the Presbytery of Hamilton. Lunch and snacks would also be provided to encourage greater participation.

The name of the retreat was REFRESH (Restoring Energy, Faith and Renewal of Every Single Heart). The theme was “Standing on the Rock” with scriptural focus on 1 Samuel 2:3: “There is no rock like our God.”

During the retreats, we had large group sessions that included special guest musicians, messages from participating ministers, and singing hymns and camp songs. There were also small group activities to strengthen the bonds and relationships between congregants of the three churches. Activities that took place included rock painting, card making, life story art, tarp volleyball, card games, and milk bag weaving of bed mats to support the unhoused in our city.

Participants of the retreats were not just from the three congregations. It was an amazing outreach opportunity as well—many people invited their friends to come. In total, 54 people registered for the program. Of that, half attended all four sessions.

There was so much positive feedback from those that participated. Many shared how special it made them feel to be “seen” by their churches, as most church programs are focused on children



With the theme of solid foundations, we invited each team to build up a tower as tall as they could.

and young families.

Some comments included: “I enjoyed getting to know members from other churches better”; “I think the format and variety of stations was a good blend of activities”; “The meals were outstanding.”

The most common response we received was, “When are we doing this again?” Based on this, conversations have already begun on holding another retreat in the fall.



Participants were encouraged to take part in activities to engage in movement, as much as they were able.



During the retreat, we used donated milk bags to create mats for the unhoused in our community. They are waterproof and also keep a lot of bags out of landfills.

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The group gathered at the “Small Church, Big Impact!” event.



The Rev. Marianne Emig Carr.

Small Church, Big Impact

*By the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr,
First Presbyterian Church in
Brockville and St. Paul's
Presbyterian Church in
Caintown, Ont.*

On May 2, the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry welcomed 40 participants, including people

from the Presbyteries of Lanark & Renfrew, Ottawa and Quebec, for a day of learning, reflection and encouragement at the connectional event, “Small Church, Big Impact!”

Moderator of the 2025 General Assembly, the Rev. Jeffrey Murray, was the guest speaker. Draw-

ing on his experience in small church ministry, Jeff offered thoughtful insights, practical wisdom and stories that resonated deeply with those gathered. His presentation sparked meaningful conversation, and a lively question-and-answer session gave participants the opportunity to explore both challenges and possibilities facing small congregations today.

Following a time of fellowship over lunch, attendees took part in a SOAR workshop (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results). This interactive session invited congregations to reflect on their unique gifts and to consider

how those strengths might be faithfully lived out within their own communities. The energy in the room was tangible, as groups engaged in hopeful, forward-looking conversations grounded in faith and purpose.

Throughout the day, there was a genuine sense of connection and shared calling. The hall was filled with conversation, laughter and a spirit of collaboration. Participants left encouraged, inspired and equipped with fresh ideas to carry back to their congregations.

Even in smaller settings, God continues to do big things—and this gathering was a powerful reminder of the impact that faith-



The Rev. Jeffrey Murray.

ful, connected communities can have. Many thanks to St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Ingleside, Ont., for hosting the connectional event, and to the Presbytery Mission Committee for planning and organizing the day's activities!



Brockville's Church School Challenge

*By the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr,
First Presbyterian Church in
Brockville and St. Paul's
Presbyterian Church in
Caintown, Ont.*

The children and youth of First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., once again showed that small hands can make a big difference. Throughout June, they created and sold a variety of handmade items, inviting members of the congregation to make donations in support of Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D).

Thanks to the generosity of the congregation and the enthusiasm

of the children, nearly \$400 was raised. The funds will be used to purchase items selected by the children from the PWS&D section of the PCC's Gifts of Change catalogue, helping to provide practical support for vulnerable people and communities around the world.

Congratulations to our wonderful church school children for their creativity, generosity and commitment to helping others. Thank you as well to our dedicated church school leaders for encouraging the children to put their faith into action, and to everyone in the congregation who supported the challenge. Together, we are making a difference!



The church school children at First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont.

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Celebrating Canada in Downtown Ottawa



By Grace Pot, Knox Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont.

Despite a heatwave on Canada Day and a sudden storm that almost blew the outdoor canopy over to Parliament Hill, Knox Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., hosted its second “Vinyl in the Garden” on July 1 from noon to 6 p.m.

Folks visiting from across Canada, families new to the country, locals and street friends stopped in for cold lemonade, a welcome Freezie, and a chat on their way downtown.

This endeavour was the brainchild of Nic van Beek, whose gift for curating music—specifically soul, gospel, disco and Afro—was combined with creating a welcoming space in Knox’s well-loved garden.

Information was available for two specific programs and events that are on Knox’s heart—the Out of the Cold ministry, in its 31st season, and the One Roof for All campaign, started in May 2026 for the church’s leaky roof, a roof that services many community groups, weddings, rentals and worship.

Some monetary donations were gathered. More importantly, the congregation fostered awareness about its mission, played cool vinyl music, made positive connections with people, shared garden shade and cold lemonade, and celebrated Canada in downtown Ottawa.



A Warm Welcome to Canada

By the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr,
First Presbyterian Church in
Brockville and St. Paul’s
Presbyterian Church in
Caintown, Ont.

The Akram Masih family arrived safely in Canada on June 24 as Pakistani refugees sponsored by the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry in partnership with the charity Refugees 4 Refugees.

Pastor Akram Masih, his wife Ireen Perveen and their son Jashwa John are now beginning a new chapter of life in Cornwall, Ont., where they are being welcomed and supported by the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry and the congregation of St. John’s Presbyterian Church.

After years of planning, praying, fundraising, paperwork and waiting, it is a joy to celebrate their safe arrival. Sincere thanks go to the PWS&D Refugee Spon-

sorship Team, the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry, Refugees 4 Refugees, St. John’s Presbyterian Church, and the many volunteers who are helping the Masih family establish a new home. The compassion and commitment of all who helped make this happen are

providing the family with the opportunity to live in safety, freedom and hope.

Please continue to keep Akram, Ireen and Jashwa in your prayers as they settle into their new community and begin this exciting new chapter in Canada.



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Learning About United Mission to Nepal

*By the Rev. Jacqueline Cleland,
Knox Presbyterian Church
in Sooke, B.C.*

This spring, we were blessed to welcome the Rev. Lora Nafziger at Knox Presbyterian Church in Sooke, B.C. Lora serves as staff care and counselling advisor with United Mission to Nepal (UMN), a faith-based international non-governmental organization, supported by The Presbyterian Church in Canada, that strives to help all Nepalis achieve a fuller life through medical and community development programs. She is currently serving as PCC mission staff, thanks to generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. This fund is also supporting Lora as she visits PCC congregations across Canada to talk about her ministry and mission in Nepal.

We were delighted to host Lora as our guest teacher. She skillfully connected her continuation of

Christ's ministry to the scriptures we were studying, specifically focusing on Zechariah 5:1–4. Her presentation style was as innovative as it was engaging—she arrived with a portable, folding projector that connected directly to her phone, allowing her to share visuals that brought the context of her work in Nepal to life.

What she shared was touching and eye-opening on a different level. There was a strong discussion about what it means to be supported in living a good life based on the Gospel of John, and diagrams of what an unsupported life looked like and how rooting in the gospel involves multilayer support. It truly focuses on building people up as part of the call to follow Jesus.

We learned how cheese is so difficult to come by in Nepal. Water buffalos are the most common source of dairy due to the Hindu culture respecting cows as



The Rev. Lora Nafziger.

holy, and there is a belief that you should only get milk by someone who is considered “clean,” or you become unclean. Now, if this was referring to pasteurization processes it might have made more sense to us in our context. What caused us to stop and think was learning it was a reciprocal relationship. There is a belief that if an

unclean person drinks your milk, the milk of the water buffalo and cow becomes unclean.

So, what does it mean to be unclean? We learned that many people in Nepal have a real understanding of many of the themes we read about in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. They know what it means for women to have to stay in the cattle barn while menstruating. When giving out chai, they will not give the women milk, just in case they may be on their period and thus render what they touch “unclean.”

This gave rise to deeper and more nuanced conversations. Such as, in Nepal there is a blessing every day in Hindu, and yet Christians in the Western world rarely do that. Can we learn to be more vocal and expressive in our faith?

In Nepal, Christian organizations are required to work together—

a deep unity within a diversity. How will that ecumenism shape the future when it can feel to those of us in the west that we are in silos?

I think it is a wonder and a power to see how Christ can change things, how God uses good people to focus mission work on vital things like a good livelihood for all, less domestic and gender violence, sustainable agriculture and the Spirit. As Christians continue their work, discussions about unclean people are changing. People who get access to nutrition and funds are changing. The donations we give are helping.

The mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to serve those in need, to work for justice and peace, to witness to the power of God's love in the world.

Visit pccweb.ca/missionblog/the-rev-lora-nafziger to learn more about Lora and her work.

Visual Liturgy with Richard Topping



The Rev. Dr. Richard Topping at Knox Presbyterian Church.

*By the Rev. Jacqueline Cleland,
Knox Presbyterian Church
in Sooke, B.C.*

On Sunday, May 17, Knox Presbyterian Church in Sooke, B.C., was privileged to host the Rev. Dr. Richard Topping, President and Vice-Chancellor of the Vancouver School of Theology, as our guest preacher and teacher. A leading scholar, author and respected voice throughout the church, Dr. Topping brought both deep academic wisdom and pastoral

warmth to our congregation.

In one of the congregation's favourite moments, Dr. Topping warmly requested to be introduced simply as a grandfather, as his grandson was present in the pews. Inspired by his sermon topic, the choir presented a gift of music: “Grace Alone.” Dr. Topping then delivered a powerful morning sermon titled “Prodigal God,” based on Luke 15, and later shared his current research during an engaging afternoon talk on the Holy Spirit and the

Christian life.

The afternoon discussions had three focus points: individual faith and spiritual formation; our communal and congregational focus; and outward-facing mission and outreach.

To bridge this high-level scholarship with our local communal experience, an artist from the congregation, Christine Emery, painted a real-time watercolour during the service. Named “The Holy Spirit in the Living Waters of Sooke,” the painting captures her artistic interpretation of Dr. Topping's research within our local context.

In a creative nod to Dr. Topping's personal passion for birdwatching and photography, the artwork replaces the traditional dove with the American Dipper. This connects his theology directly to the local geography of Vancouver Island, standing on the unceded traditional territory of the T'Sou-ke Nation. Just as the American Dipper thrives amid the

turbulent, rushing currents of the Sooke Potholes, its existence represents a resilient, active faith. By going beneath the water's surface to find nourishment, this remarkable bird beautifully illustrates the Reformed tradition of discovering the extraordinary presence of the divine within the ordinary, everyday rhythms of life.

The sermon, teaching and artwork also pay tribute to the spiritual legacy of our late Knox member Deborah, who deeply valued academic study and nurtured the life of the mind at any age. The presence of Dr. Topping, who has spent decades preparing thoughtful and generous Christian leaders, perfectly mirrored this legacy.

This inspiring day of worship deeply enriched our community. We are deeply grateful for Dr. Topping's leadership, friendship and inspiring vision. We look forward to seeing the Holy Spirit more profoundly in our world moving forward.



2025 ANNUAL PENSION STATEMENTS: THE PCC PENSION PLAN HUB

Questions? Contact pension@presbyterian.ca

The Pension and Benefits department is excited to announce that the **PCC Pension Plan Hub** is now active! This is a secure online portal where you can access your Annual Pension Statement as well as other general pension information, such as the PCC Pension Plan booklet.

If you are a current or deferred vested member of the PCC Pension Plan, please check you email inbox for registration information.



Celebrating Music in Orillia



A congregational blessing for Marshall's retirement.



Marshall Martin at the organ.

*By the Rev. Shelly Chandler,
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
in Orillia, Ont.*

On June 21, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont., said goodbye to long-time music director and organist Marshall Martin, who had served in this role since 1994—more than 32 years! He is the congregation's longest serving organist, serving just a few months longer than predecessor, J.D. Gordon (1925–1957). Prior to this role, Marshall was the assistant organist/organ scholar under the tutelage of Robert Wight. He has worked with 18 ministers throughout his career.

Shortly after taking on this role, Marshall asked for \$300,000 to restore the Casavant–Letourneau Grande Pipe Organ Opus 0889, which was installed in 1921. The congregation rose to the challenge and from 1995–1997, Marshall oversaw the restoration.

As the music director, not only did Marshall direct the sanctu-

ary choir, but he also began and directed another singing group, Higher Ground, in 1997, which sang more contemporary pieces, along with directing the bell choir, which began in 1967. On his penultimate Sunday, he presented plaques to two members who had been with the bell choir since its inception: Margaret Archer and Thelma McPherson. Marshall also brought his gifts to the Orillia & Area Seniors' Centre, which began in 2010 with the Rev. Dr. Karen Horst, leading various musical activities weekly.

In 1998, following a difficult time in the history of the church, Marshall wrote a song of blessing that he hoped would be healing to the congregation. "Go Now in Peace" includes a Four-fold Amen and marked the first time in the church's 147-year history that the congregation broke from singing the Three-fold Amen at the end of worship.

Marshall has been an integral member of the congregation, going above and beyond his job



Marshall with family and friends at the post-worship luncheon.

description. He helped with physical set-up of rooms for events, helped in the kitchen as necessary, he served at various dinners and teas. He was ordained as an elder of the church in 1996. And most recently, he has been an active member of the 175th Anniversary Planning Team.

Marshall has taught many to play the piano and organ through the years, including a young Jeff Campbell from 1994–1997. How could Marshall know that he was training his own successor? Jeff was commissioned to director of music and organist on June 28. Although the congregation is pleased to welcome Jeff, Marshall is well loved and will be greatly missed!

180th Anniversary of Valetta PC



Clerk of Session Robert Ivison with Stella and Reid, members of the Sunday school who created the scene and enjoyed the day's celebration.

*By Jayne Broughton,
Valetta Presbyterian Church
in Chatham-Kent, Ont.*

Valetta Presbyterian Church, a long-standing faith community in the rural farming area of Chatham-Kent and part of the Essex-Kent Presbytery, celebrated its 180th anniversary this past June as members, neighbours,

and friends came together in a strong show of community spirit. Our interim moderator, the Rev. Shirley Murdock, organized the anniversary service.

As the congregation and guests arrived, pipers from Branch 642 of the Royal Canadian Legion Pipe Band welcomed them. The service opened with a moving pipe-and-organ duet of "In Christ

Alone," and then the Rev. Nancy Carle led a joyful singalong of old familiar hymns, accompanied by guest pianist Dr. David Carle.

Following the hymn sing, the Rev. Shirley Murdock offered a warm welcome to the congregation and guests as the anniversary service began. The Rev. Gordon Brown, who is a fifth-generation member of the Valetta community, shared a fascinating history of the church with the congregation. Chatham-Kent Mayor Darrin Canniff brought greetings and congratulations on behalf of the municipality and presented a commemorative plaque to clerk of Session Robert Ivison. The Rev. Lisa Aide, moderator of the Essex-Kent Presbytery, conveyed greetings from both the presbytery and the General Assembly.

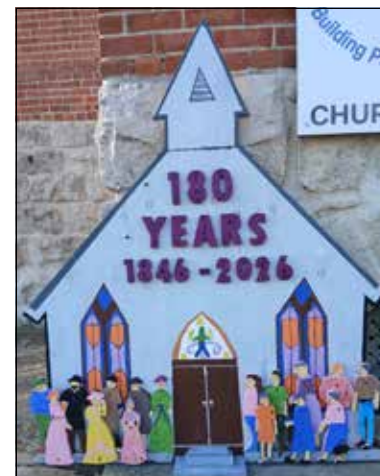
During children's worship, the Rev. Lillian Wilton told the story "Balloons and Stones," after which everyone joined in singing, "I've got the Joy, Joy." The Rev. Chuck Congram delivered a sermon titled "Where Does

Peace Come From?"—a message well-suited for our times. The Rev. Mike Maroney led the congregation in a "Covenant Renewal," followed by the children of the church distributing stones inscribed with the word "PEACE."

The congregation also celebrated the creativity and dedication of Sunday school students with the presentation and unveiling of seasonal signs they had created. A beautifully quilted banner, crafted as a lasting addition to the sanctuary, was also presented and dedicated during the service.

Following the dedication ceremony, the Rev. Shirley Murdock led the congregation in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and then the Rev. Nancy Carle brought the service to a meaningful close with a solo performance of "Peace I Leave with You."

The celebration continued with a wonderful reception, featuring an abundant cold meal, along with delicious cakes and squares shared among members, guests and friends.



The scene that was placed at the front of the church, designed and painted by members of the Sunday school, to announce Valetta PC's anniversary celebration.



The commemorative banner.

Walking with Taiwan



*By the Rev. Jay Liang, Toronto
Formosan Presbyterian
Church in Toronto, Ont.*

In April 2026, church leaders, theologians and ecumenical partners from around the world gathered in Changhua, Taiwan, for the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF), hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). The theme, “The Right to Self-Determination and the Missionary Role of the Church in the Geopolitical Context of Taiwan,” raised questions about Taiwan’s future, the sovereignty of God, and the public witness of the church.

On the international stage, Taiwan is often seen as a piece in the global chess game of larger powers. But when a people is reduced to a geopolitical problem, their voice is often left unheard. Therefore, the forum asked what it means to recognize the Taiwanese people not merely as an object of international concern but as principal participants in shaping their own lives.

From the outset, the TEF explored the relationship between divine sovereignty and human agency. The Rev. Dr. Huang Po-Ho framed self-determination through the lens of faith. If God alone is sovereign, then no in-

dividual, community, or nation can claim to be the authority on freedom, particularly for others. Human freedom is always exercised in accountability to God and responsibility toward others.

At the same time, divine sovereignty cannot justify domination. God’s reign does not render people passive, nor does it permit larger powers to determine the future of others without their meaningful participation. As those created in the image of God, all people possess dignity, responsibility and agency.

The Rev. Philip V. Peacock widened the discussion through his reflection on Dalit communities of Indian heritage. In that context, self-determination is not primarily about establishing a separate nation but about resisting a social order that assigns people an inferior place and restricts their dignity, opportunities and voice. His presentation showed that self-determination extends beyond borders, statehood and international recognition. It also asks whether communities are recognized as participants in their future or treated as objects of another power’s interests.

For Taiwan, this concern is not abstract, as its history has been shaped by colonial rule, authori-

tarian government and a difficult transition to democracy. Its people also live with the reality that decisions made elsewhere continue to press upon their lives. The central concern, then, is whether Taiwan can continue to shape its own future without coercion.

During the forum, this concern became quite vivid. Several delegates described receiving anonymous emails before and during the gathering. Some messages contained false information regarding cancelled flights and travel restrictions. Others intended to discredit or misrepresent the forum. Messages were also sent to delegate churches, institutions and even personal contacts, with some language described as threatening.

The forum took time to hear these accounts, and participants recognized that these were not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern in attempts to create confusion, undermine trust and apply pressure.

In response, the Council for World Mission and the World Communion of Reformed Churches issued a joint statement affirming the integrity of the TEF and condemning misleading and coercive communications. The statement called on churches to resist intimidation and to stand in solidarity with the PCT and those gathered at the forum.

The language of empire helps clarify what is at stake. Empire does not refer only to political or military domination by state actors, but it also names patterns of power that seek to control whose voices are heard, whose accounts are believed, who may



The Rev. Jay Liang speaking.

gather without fear and whose futures may be shaped by others. In that light, misinformation, intimidation and the erosion of trust are not incidental but ways coercive powers press upon communities and institutions.

The church must confront such patterns wherever they appear, including within its own life. Christian solidarity with Taiwan cannot mean exchanging one nationalism for another. The church’s deepest allegiance is not to any state but to Jesus Christ, whose reign is marked by justice, mercy and peace.

For this reason, the TEF did more than affirm a political principle—it asked what solidarity requires of the wider church: careful listening, humility and a commit-

ment to remain present when the dignity and agency of a people are placed under pressure.

For Presbyterians in Canada, our relationship with the PCT extends beyond our connected history and institutional partnership. It calls us to pray, to listen closely and to resist narratives that reduce the island to a geopolitical issue. It also calls us to remain present in friendship and faith when public attention turns elsewhere.

To walk with Taiwan is to refuse to let its people disappear behind the language of geopolitics. It is to receive them as neighbours, to stand with them without presuming to stand in their place, and to bear witness together to the justice and peace of Christ.



The gathering for the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum.



The congregation at Bethel Presbyterian Church in Sydney, N.S., held a special Ascension Day sunrise service. Members of the congregation gathered at the beach at Mira Gut to enjoy a stunning sunrise and have a short service out in creation. The service included a reading from Acts 1:1–11, prayers and a short meditation.



At a recent meeting, the Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington celebrated the over 100-year history of its presbyterial, as the present phase of their life comes to an end.



The elders and Session clerk at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sylvan Lake, Alta., are pictured at the induction of newest elder, Dana Dean.



On Saturday, April 25, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., hosted a Women's Retreat on the theme "Rooted in Stillness."



Volunteers at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Coldwater, Ont., paused for lunch following a successful morning of deep cleaning and maintenance. The workday brought together members of the congregation to spruce up the church building, demonstrating their shared commitment to care for their place of worship and strengthen community fellowship.



At Christmas, the Ladies Guild at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sylvan Lake, Alta., supplied gifts for the parents of children who received support through the Christmas Bureau.



A group at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sylvan Lake, Alta., cooks and serves Christmas dinner on December 25 to anyone who doesn't have a family to have dinner with. They provide delicious food and joy to the whole community! Extra gratitude goes out to Lynn and Lorna for sharing their gifts every Christmas Day.



The Ladies' Guild of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Dartmouth, N.S., held a spring indoor yard sale to raise funds for the congregation and other outreach initiatives. The congregation and friends of the congregation donated many items for the sale, including a lawn mower and an air conditioner. Approximately 200 people walked through the Church Hall to view the items! Many from the congregation volunteered their time to prepare for, and work during, the sale. The Guild was pleased to raise nearly \$3,000.



North Bramalea Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ont., celebrated Father's Day on June 21 with fellowship and hospitality. Following worship, fathers in attendance participated in slicing and serving cake. Several fathers were in attendance, and a good time was had by all.



The congregation at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Sylvan Lake, Alta., held a special Easter Sunrise Service on the pier at Sylvan Lake. This was an ecumenical service—those of any faith or no faith were welcomed with music, scripture, hot crossed buns and warm drinks.



Members of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Coldwater, Ont., proudly dressed in red and white for Sunday worship as they celebrated Canada Day and looked ahead to Team Canada's upcoming FIFA World Cup match. The festive occasion followed the congregation's popular Christmas Sweater Sunday and Easter Hat/Bonnet Sunday celebrations, continuing a growing tradition of themed worship days that combine faith, fellowship and fun. The colourful display reflected both community spirit and the congregation's enthusiasm for celebrating special occasions together. In good Presbyterian fashion, a spread of delicious food followed the service.





Members of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville, Ont., are invited to get together once a month for good food, good company and a good chat. Wendy Rolfe (pictured second from the front on the right) organizes this by picking a new place each month and making reservations. Her message to those considering attending is, “Please come, as there is always room at the table!”



At the June 16 presbytery meeting, the Presbytery of Pickering recognized the Rev. Dr. Ian Morrison’s 60th anniversary of ordination. Pictured are presbytery moderator Alvin Kim, Ian Morrison and Bethany McCaffrey, clerk.



Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville, Ont., celebrated their choir, musicians and their music director with an evening of music. Talented music director Sara Joy, along with members of the band and choir, presented this special evening of music with the theme of Unity. They played an assortment of religious and secular pieces, and all those who attended were entertained and delighted. A generous freewill offering was collected in support of Halton Food for Thought (Student Nutrition Programs).



First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., again participated with other local churches in the Big Give on June 6 with a big rummage giveaway! The Church Hall was filled with clothing, books, toys, household items, sports equipment, and so much more, and the congregation was delighted to share all that with the community—all completely free. Hundreds of items were given away, and countless smiles were received in return! Thank you to the amazing volunteers and to everyone who came by. It was a joy to experience the spirit of generosity, connection and community together.



Stacey Knechtel and Frank Collins provided beautiful, uplifting music on the piano and saxophone and with their voices, on May 3, during Community Presbyterian Church’s anniversary service in Almonte, Ont.



From July 9 to 12, over 450 Ghanaian youth attended the North American Ghanaian Presbyterian Youth Conference, hosted by the Montreal Ghanaian Presbyterian Church and held at Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Que. Entitled "Now or Never," the conference was filled with lively worship, music, dance and Bible study. Enthusiastically embraced by all in attendance, the highlight of the conference was the keynote address delivered by the Rev. Eric Jeshrun, a passionate preacher, youth empowerment coach and worshipper who expresses his love for God through his music and words. As host congregation, the Montreal Ghanaian Presbyterian Church and the Rev. Joseph K. Ansa are to be congratulated for organizing such an amazing conference that touched the lives of so many young people. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was extremely pleased to support this event through the Conference Support Fund, which is made possible thanks to generous gifts received through Presbyterians Sharing.



The congregation at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Dartmouth, N.S., has been collecting items regularly every Sunday for several years to support the Christ Church Food Ministry in downtown Dartmouth. Recently, a food drive was held to collect much-needed items. The congregation donated 94 toothpastes, 76 toothbrushes, 90 cans of cat food, 12 packages of razor blades, 92 bars of soap, 27 bottles of shampoo, many rolls of toilet paper, 30 deodorants and other miscellaneous items. Jim and Kathy Kennedy, pictured, coordinated the drive.



Inspired by Burlington East Community Presbyterian Church's new mission statement, "Sharing and Living Jesus' Love Every Day," the congregation in Burlington, Ont., is embracing a fresh new look and unveiling a new sign that reflects the church's identity, vision and commitment to the community.



Congratulations to Quentin Robinson on his retirement as clerk of Session after more than 12 years of faithful and dedicated service to First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont. Quentin will continue to serve as an elder on Session, and the congregation is deeply grateful for his ongoing leadership. During worship on June 28, the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr presented Quentin with a card and gift on behalf of the congregation as a small token of their appreciation. Thank you, Quentin, for your faithfulness and service!



What a fantastic final PA Day Camp of the 2025–26 school year! On May 29, campers came to First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., and enjoyed a wonderful day of games, crafts, outdoor fun and learning about kindness in the Church Hall. They also visited the Brockville and Area Food Bank and donated an amazing 66 lbs of food to support the community. A heartfelt thank you to all volunteers and the congregation, whose support makes the PA Day Camps possible. The next PA Day Camp will be held on October 26.



On June 27, North Bramalea Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ont., held its annual Spring Craft and Bake Sale. In addition to a variety of freshly baked goods, household items, jewelry, clothing, plants, etc., for sale, the congregation received excellent support from the community. Thanks to the many volunteers who contributed to another successful event.



On March 29, Palm Sunday, the congregation at Lakeview Presbyterian Church in Thunder Bay, Ont., had a special children's service to honour the kids while the congregation celebrated its 100th anniversary. Special songs were played, the Lord's Prayer was acted out and a psalm was performed, while the scripture reading used Holy Moly videos. The sermon was an extended children's sermon, while the offering was brought up by the children themselves—all done with palm branches and loud hosannas. A joyous, youthful time!



The Prayer Partners group at North Bramalea Presbyterian Church (NBPC) in Brampton, Ont., celebrated their 2nd anniversary on July 12, by participating in the worship service and offering hospitality afterwards. This ministry consists of nine participants, though not everyone was available at the time the photo was taken.



PCC Certificates

Certificates are available for baptisms, marriages, membership transfer, elder recognitions, and more!

presbyterian.ca/certificates



Knox Presbyterian Church in Conn., Ont., celebrated its 160th anniversary on June 28. Interim Moderator the Rev. Peter Bush was the guest speaker and reminded the congregation that Knox Conn is older than Canada. He used the stones in Joshua 4 to relate to the bricks of the church and to bear witness to God's presence through time. Special music was provided by the Kerr family, who have been with the church for several generations, and the church choir. As part of the celebration, two heritage plaques were dedicated. One plaque belongs to the Mount Forest Museum and Archives project and focuses on the architectural features of the building. It will be placed on the outside wall. The second plaque focuses on the heritage of the congregation and will be placed inside the church. Knox Conn is trusting God and is ready to take the step of moving forward. Pictured (left to right) are MP John Nater, mayor of Wellington Andy Lennox, Clerk of Session Penny Renken and MPP Matthew Rae.



An opportunity presented itself for members of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville, Ont., to join with Kerr Street Mission (KSM) to serve the community by providing meals for those in need. The congregation formed a group who felt called to cook, serve a meal in cafeteria-style, and clean up afterwards in the commercial kitchen at KSM. The group plans to provide four meals a year. They shop, prepare, cook and serve 60 meals as part of this outreach. Gratitude goes out to coordinator Grant Swanson (pictured in the chef hat) for bringing this mission to the church's attention. The first KSM community dinner team was made up of Grant, Lise, Linda, Carolyn, Neil, Donna-Michelle, Chris, Comfort and Doreen. Missing from the photo are Karen and Tina, who did all the shopping.



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Caintown, Ont., welcomed clergy and representative elders of the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry for the June presbytery meeting. The day began with a worship service led by St. Paul's minister, the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr, with the Caintown Choir providing special music that enriched the service. Following worship, the congregation warmly welcomed guests with refreshments before serving a delicious luncheon. The presbytery expressed its appreciation for the generous hospitality shown by the congregation throughout the day. Pictured above are some church members who hosted the meeting.



Participants from the congregations of St. Andrew's and St. David's Presbyterian Churches in St. John's, N.L., came together for an intergenerational walk through Holy Week re-enactment service, held on Palm Sunday 2026. The popular re-enactment of the events of Holy Week by members of the congregation of St. Andrew's has been an annual event for some time.



On Sunday, June 28, Presbyterians from across Ontario, along with members from Armour Heights Presbyterian Church, joined together to celebrate Presbyterian pride at the Toronto Pride Parade.



On May 31, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont., celebrated their 175th anniversary. Pictured here are Judi Fairwell and Cliff Whitfield along with the Rev. Shelly Chandler. Also pictured are the ministers who attended the anniversary service: the Rev. Dr. Rick Horst, the Rev. Dr. Karen Horst (2010–2019), the Rev. Shelly Chandler (2022–present), the Rev. Dr. Richard Topping (guest preacher) and the Rev. Cameron Bigelow (1993–1998). PHOTO CREDIT: NADEEN MORANO PHOTOGRAPHY



During the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in June, many in attendance visited the Collective 2026 display to learn more about the program and show their support for the youth, young adults and leaders who will be in attendance this summer. The laughter heard when someone was donning the inflatable flamingo let everyone know just how much fun was going to be had on August 12–15.



Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Beaconsfield, Que., is pleased to announce the induction of its new minister, the Rev. Geoffrey Bah, on April 19. Geoffrey and his wife, Mercy, have come to Canada from Cameroon. Pictured here is the gathering of the Presbytery of Montreal and ecumenical partners. A dinner for 60 was served and much enjoyed by all.



From May 11 to 14, members of the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) from across Canada met for business, fun, fellowship and learning at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ont. The theme was "The Dawning of Hope," based on Isaiah 43:18–19. With opening worship by the Rev. Dora Arce Valentin (from Cuba) and the Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon, guest presentations followed on the Living Waters for the World project in Cuba, Cuban churches and community, and on Israel-Palestine. The group participated in a drumming circle, learned about the PCC's intercultural work, had a presentation on the recent Nepal mission trip, and tried their hand at making cards and a faux stained-glass coaster. On the last night, they gathered for music, games and snacks. The week concluded with the installation of new officers. It was a special time for everyone who had a chance to reconnect with old friends and to make new friends from British Columbia to Quebec.



The Rev. Dr. David Clark, minister at New St. James Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., is pictured here with women of the church in their Easter bonnets.



On Sunday, April 26, the Heather Club of First Presbyterian Church in Brandon, Man., celebrated their 100th birthday by serving cake after the service. The Heather Club has consistently played an active and vital role in the fellowship and nurturing of the church since 1926. They have funded many projects. The women meet once a month, have devotions, conduct business and enjoy a cup of tea. Members also make visits to church members and send cards and flowers on a variety of occasions.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Coldwater, Ont., welcomed two new members during their service on June 21. Pictured are Patrick Voo, lead communicator; Gail Haverson and Janice Palmer, new members; Aubrey Hawton, clerk of Session and sacrament elder; and Janet Johnstone, sacrament elder. PHOTO CREDIT: DAVE HOSSACK



NEWS AND PHOTOS FROM THE 2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

VIEW HIGHLIGHTS, MEETING MINUTES AND PHOTOS FROM THE 2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

PRESBYTERIAN.CA/GA2026



On Saturday, May 9, the Great Armour Heights Baking Club prepared many delicious treats for a special Mother's Day Tea for the next day, held at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.



Trinity Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., is proud to share that five people were ordained as new elders on Sunday, June 14. The congregation is so pleased to have these dedicated people join the Session.



On Friday, May 15, at Sedgewick Memorial Presbyterian Church in Tatamagouche, N.S., the congregation celebrated the 90th birthday of Ken Beck. They also celebrated his service as organist for 60 years, retiring just last year. Pictured here are the Rev. Mark McLennan, Ken Beck and Mary Hunter, clerk of Session.



It was a sundae Sunday at Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville, Ont., on June 7. The congregation was invited for fellowship and ice cream treats immediately after worship. The special service included ordaining the new group of elders that had been elected on May 24. What a great way to celebrate together. Sandra, Chris and Ellen are pictured here joyfully making the cones.



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Wiarton, Ont., has a 1906 Breckels & Matthews pipe organ (still in its original condition) that has been recognized as an organ of historic significance by the Royal Canadian College of Organists and the Organ Historical Society in the U.S. This organ has been in regular use at services since it was installed. The Grey Bruce chapter of the RCCO has honoured it as their 2026 Organ of the Year.



A wide variety of outreach and mission activities have recently taken place at Leaside Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont. Events included a World Cup Watch Party; the Rev. Paul Kang and Sylvia McLean participating in the Toronto Pride Parade; a lunch and learn with Palestinian Christian Deacon Bassem Thabet; the first-ever Learn to Play Mahjong event; and collecting donations of casseroles for Evangel Hall Mission.



On Saturday, June 13, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., hosted a 1920s-style garden party with community partner Mosaic Home Care & Resource Centre.



On May 2, ARISE Ministry hosted a gala at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., featuring guest speaker Angel Power and Mayor of Oshawa Dan Carter. ARISE Ministry is a mission of the Presbytery of East Toronto and is supported by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. ARISE was founded in 2013 by the Rev. Deb Stanbury to help women in the sex trade to reclaim their lives through hope, love and justice. Over the past decade, ARISE has grown and evolved to serve even more individuals involved in the sex trade.



Listening and Learning in South Africa

By the Rev. Joan Masterton

"Listen and learn..." Late last year, Presbyterians were invited to listen and learn about the South African experience of truth, reconciliation and healing. How would it compare to the Canadian experience? The invitation to visit South Africa in such a context was welcomed by 12 of us, and on March 18, we gathered at Toronto Pearson Airport to begin the journey. Our shepherd was Grace McCreary from the Life and Mission Agency, and our guide was the Rev. Dr. Bob Faris. We were in good hands! Within a few days, we were bonded as friends and fellow explorers.

A little background: Apartheid, institutionalized racial segregation, was imposed in South Africa in 1948, following a history of colonization and slavery begun in the 1650s with the arrival of the Dutch and later the British. The people were separated and ranked in every possible way by their ethnicity: Black, White, Coloured, Indigenous. Apartheid ended in the 1990s following international pressure, the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, and approval from white voters in a national referendum.

Who did we "listen" to during our visit? We were privileged to hear from faith leaders (United, Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Methodist and Islamic) and from them we learned the roles played by the church before, during and follow-



The PCC trip participants to South Africa and some professors of the theological department at Stellenbosch University.

ing apartheid. We worshipped with congregants at Rondebosch United Church, who shared their perspectives on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: many felt that although the hearings were a step in the right direction, there has been little accountability following the Commission.

We listened to individuals who shared with us their personal lived experience of apartheid. Elwin, an Indigenous Khoi man, described how his own tribal history had been kept from him most of his life; now, he has returned to his traditional homelands and encourages others to make the effort to discover their own roots. Sister Susan recalled her experience of being evicted from District 6 as a child. She and her family and hundreds of others were forcibly removed from their homes so that white neighbourhoods could expand. Phumolang guided us on a tour of Robben Island where Nelson Mandela and thousands of others who spoke out for free-

dom and justice were imprisoned and compelled to submit to hard manual labour for many years. Only after the tour did Phumolang inform us that he had also been imprisoned there, to the significant detriment of both his physical and mental well-being. The Rev. René August guided us through the Desmond and Leah Tutu Museum and spoke of the powerful influence Archbishop Tutu ("The Arch," to his friends) had on upholding both racial and gender equality.

We also spent time with, and listened to, those who are working today to bring about healing and reconciliation. Volmoed is a retreat centre that offers hospitality, tranquility, twice-weekly worship and fabulous meals. Volmoed is also home to Dr. John de Gruchy, a theologian known for his work in resisting apartheid, primarily through the lens of the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Dr. de Gruchy is also an Extraordinary Professor at Stellenbosch University, which we also visited. Volmoed is currently exploring the dynamics of how to transfer trans-generational wellness (not trauma) and has connected with other like-minded centres of peace, like Taizé in France.

One of our most remarkable encounters was with Siya, a young Black man who led us in an afternoon of drumming. He was influenced by his church and is now a youth advocate as well as a drummer and teacher in the making of the drums. Siya was asked what he hoped for in his own personal life during the next five years. When he finally responded, he said he couldn't answer the question. His future is bound up with the youth he serves. Connectedness is part of Siya's self-identity. It was a remarkable demonstration of the African philosophy of *ubuntu*: "I am because we are."

Amid all of these listening and learning opportunities, we were also blessed with opportunities to "taste and see" South African culture, food, wine and animals. We also dipped our toes into the icy cold waters on the western side of the country, and the much warmer water on the eastern side. We enjoyed delicious meals, had lots of time for shopping in local markets, and watched young people singing and dancing in the parks.

Perhaps of greatest value to us as participants on this trip was our gathering every evening to share our thoughts and perspectives on what we had experienced. Everyone had a chance to speak, and then we would open into comments and questions. We listened to, and learned from, each other. Together, we pondered the fact that prior to the official installation of apartheid, the South African government sent delegations to Canada to learn from the Canadian system of Indigenous reserves and schools. On an international scale of disparity, South Africa ranks first—it has the largest gap between richest and poorest in the world. We learned how long the shadow of apartheid is: vast inequalities still exist in land ownership, unemployment and education, as well as in many other factors.

We asked ourselves, "What is the meaning of 'mission'?" from the context of European churches that came to South Africa and imposed Christianity on those who dwelt there first. That question remains valid for us today. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus today in the 21st century?

In spite of the challenges facing the people of South Africa, there are voices and places and movements of hope and peace. Hope is a discipline, we learned; not an emotion. We were privileged to hear how churches today are striving to provide healing and joy, and they are joined in their efforts by supporters from all over the world. We witnessed and were inspired by the courage and exuberance of life among young people in their cultural expressions of singing, dancing and drumming.

As well, we remain with wonderful memories of the vibrant diversity of life in South Africa: human, faunal and floral. We will remember the camaraderie of our group, the fun of Quiddler, the seascapes as well as the landscapes, the beautiful Southern Cross constellation in the night skies, the Rev. Bob Faris's passionate love for the people of South Africa, the peace of the worship space at Volmoed, and meeting Dr. de Gruchy, among many other impressions.

A month following our return from South Africa, we gathered once again online, and shared retrospective thoughts. Overwhelmingly, gratitude for the opportunity to listen and learn in the South African context was expressed; we hope that ours was but the first of several future trips available to those who want to learn more. We remain grateful to Grace and Bob for their leadership and to our denomination for its continued emphasis on viewing our world through the "eyes of our hearts."



Sister Susan with her suitcase at the District 6 Museum.



The Genadendal Museum, which focuses on preserving Moravian mission heritage.



The Rev. René August (second from left) and the Rev. Bob Faris (far right) with members of the PCC's mission tour to South Africa.

The Justice and Joy Tour

By the Rev. Bob Faris

And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace:

yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice, justice and joy!
 From "For Everyone Born, A Place at the Table"
 by Shirley Erena Murray

When I think about South Africa, two things fill my mind—the immense beauty and diversity of its land and people, and the long struggle for justice, unity and freedom. It is a country that has suffered greatly under colonial rule and the brutal system of apartheid. Perhaps for many Canadians, the image that remains most deeply planted in our minds and hearts is that of the installation of Nelson Mandela as President at the Union Buildings in Pretoria in

1994 and the end of apartheid. It was the realization of the vision of the "Rainbow Nation" that Archbishop Desmond Tutu dreamed for the new South Africa. This beautiful country would finally be free.

However, the end of apartheid did not mean the end of inequality, and today South Africa has the dubious distinction of having the highest inequity between rich and poor of any country in the world. Luxurious neighbourhoods can be found up against impoverished slums, and people experience life in vastly different worlds. Levels of violence and corruption continue to be high, with the poorest communities most affected. Thirty years on from the end of apartheid, South Africans often wonder where the promises of a more just and joyful country have gone.

In the struggle to end apartheid, the churches played a critical role

in calling for change. As the political opposition was banned, jailed and murdered, it was often faith communities that provided leadership to the movement. People like Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane and Sheena Duncan committed themselves fully and called on international partners to stand in solidarity. Their work was critical. Today, people, especially younger people, ask where faith communities stand in relation to the challenges that face South Africa. Thirty years is a lifetime for many, and a lifetime in which hope seems to have faded.

There are those, however, who continue to strive for change. I have now had a decades-long relationship with the Volmoed Community, near Hermanus in the Western Cape. The name means "Place of Courage and Hope." It is a community that began in 1986, at the height of the states of emergency, as a place of healing and

reconciliation. Set in the beautiful Hemel en Aarde Valley, it has been a place of gathering for thousands of years. In the 19th century, it was home to a colony of people with leprosy who were joined by Moravian missionaries to create a place of dignity for those on the margins. Today, the community continues to work for justice and joy. It is a place of worship and meditation, a place for drumming and art, a place for young and for old, a place for challenge and for conversation. A place for reflection and for action.

Through the PCC's mission trip, it has been a joy for me to show people today's South Africa. To learn more about its history and its current reality. To experience the beauty of land and sea and the unique flora of the Cape called *fynbos*. To be in conversation with people who were at the forefront of the struggle in the churches, like John de Gruchy,



The Rev. Bob Faris at Robben Island, South Africa.

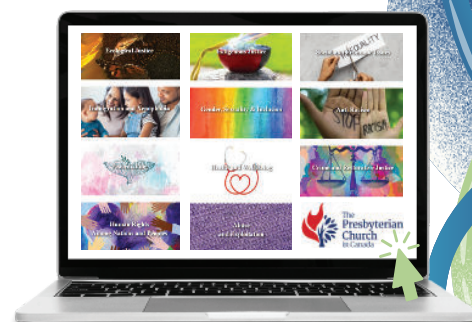
and with young people who live in the townships today and are seeking to find a path for their lives. To taste the varied cuisines and the amazing wines of the country and to see the animals of land, sea and air in this part of the African continent. And, so importantly, to learn what we can from the South African experience for our own context in Canada and to understand our common calling to be creators of justice and joy in God's amazing world.



CHECK OUT THE PCC'S SOCIAL ACTION HUB

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

Visit presbyterian.ca/social-action



A Humbling Teaching Moment



Sophia Kim at a Korean Christian Church in Japan.

By Sophia Kim, young adult serving on a six-month internship with the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ) through the PCC

Do you remember that episode of *The Twilight Zone* called “Word-play”? It follows the story of a man who slowly notices that different words have randomly

swapped meaning for everybody else. The word dinosaur is used instead of “lunch,” for instance. Everyone else seamlessly transitions into using the changing meaning of words, but the protagonist cannot keep up. Eventually, he cannot understand anything being said by anyone, even his wife and children. The episode ends with the protagonist reading a children’s picture book with an image of a dog and the word “Wednesday” underneath. He reads the word “Wednesday” aloud with grief and confusion, as he realizes he must start over to keep up with the changing times.

I was reminded of this episode as I walked around the streets of Tokyo. I had the sense that everyone around me was in on a secret code of language, culture and expectations, while I was barely keeping my head afloat. I suppose I had not considered the luxury of being aware and familiar with the dominant culture and language. I



Sophia Kim with a young adult group from church.

had spent so long trapped in my frustrations with being a young second-generation Korean Canadian that I never really stopped to consider how it must have been for my parents, stepping into an unknown world, or anyone who comes to a different country later in life.

Living and growing up in Canada, I had prided myself on my capacity to articulate and express myself appropriately and understand others on a deeper level. This was my privilege and

advantage. I could navigate public spaces, social situations and education with an ease and lightness. I remember listening to my dad share his memory of leaving Korea for the first time, arriving in the United States, only to not understand a single word from strangers. He described the disorienting sense that power relations had shifted, being treated differently, and explained how a “foreign” status positions you differently in the world. You must build yourself up from the begin-

ning, learning days of the week and reading children’s picture books. It can feel humiliating and diminishing. Perhaps I was too comfortable in my relatively safer position in the world.

I like to think that I have been invited to answer the call of renouncing all that I had in order to become a disciple of Christ (Luke 14:33). It seems ironic that the privilege of travelling and living abroad provided a humbling teaching moment and prohibited an elevated perception of who I am. But then again, I am steeped in youth, naïveté and messy contradictions.

My dad likes to say that he and I are “slow starters.” It’s been one of my least favourite qualities about myself. In a world that rewards quick results and improvement, my tepid and shaky first steps forward always feel inadequate. But, lately, I am starting to see the beauty of late bloomers. Growing pains and deep roots may not be seen from the surface, but their articulate and intricate journeys are building something that can only come from surviving periods of longing. I trust that this is not wasted time.

In God I trust and am not afraid (Psalm 56:3–4).

International Partner Visits 2027



UPCOMING TRIPS

**subject to change*

Spring of 2027 - Malawi

(led by Joel Sherbino)

Spring of 2027 - Japan & Korea

(Korean speaking)

Fall of 2027 - Nepal

(led by Lora Nafziger)



For information on additional trips, confirmed dates, application deadlines and to sign up for our newsletter, visit:

bit.ly/PCC-partner-visits

 The Presbyterian Church in Canada

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Seeds of Hope in the Warm Heart of Africa

By Guy Smagghe,
PWS&D Director

Malawi stands as one of the poorest countries in the world by most development standards. With half the population of Canada, its land mass is twice the size of Nova Scotia. It has undergone severe climate shocks in recent years, which, combined with a weak economy, has worsened food security in many parts of the country. Recent cuts to global health funding are also having a direct impact on access to health services for the population.

My recent trip to Malawi gave

me renewed confidence in PWS&D's partners and the transformational power of their work at the community level. They help young girls stay in school and escape the trap of early marriage. They help youth get training in trades that get them jobs. They work with women's groups who labour and save together to improve their livelihoods. I had the privilege to visit them in their communities. I was welcomed with songs talking about how PWS&D programs are helping to improve lives. Their dances and poems were so humbling.

I met young people like Justice

Jere and Dyson Mohango, who were previously unemployed and lacked opportunities. They were given a chance to receive vocational training in carpentry. When I met them, they were working their trade in a workshop and earning an income. They also took contracts and dreamt of setting up their own shop sometime in the near future. They were proud and happy.

I met youth who shared with us about their community efforts to address the issue of early marriages for girls. They showed us how they raised awareness on the issue through home visits and street theatre. They told us how they rescued girls, sometimes as young as 12, from early marriages and helped them go back to finish school, even if they had given birth to a child already.

Poverty is a main driver, leading parents to give away their young girls to older men who promise to care for them financially. Those girls often forfeit their education, become young mothers and remain in poverty. PWS&D's partners in Malawi are working with communities to raise the issue, and early marriages are increasingly frowned upon in villages.



Guy Smagghe, with Justice Jere, a young person who received training to be a carpenter and now has a job with dreams to open his own workshop.

As a result, more girls are able to complete their education and open the doors to better livelihood opportunities.

What impressed me most was the dedication of all those engaged with our programs. Staff and volunteers in communities demonstrated such commitment and enthusiasm that one could sense the impact of these programs. They shared first-hand stories of what they are doing. On top of working to stop early marriage, they also do home visits to discuss sexual and reproductive health and offer contraception options for boys and girls, for situations where abstinence is not chosen. HIV and AIDS are still prevalent in Malawi, and much education is being done to prevent transmission.

I got to visit mobile clinics, where pregnant young women

and their partners were getting tested for HIV, and where information was given to prevent transmission to the child; information on other health matters was made available, as well.

Malawi is known as the "warm heart of Africa" and I really felt it. I also witnessed how seeds of hope were germinating and generating beautiful results. I celebrate how young people are willing to challenge practices like child marriages, and to talk about them publicly. This is something that was unheard of a few years ago, but it now gives young girls a stronger chance to get an education and earn a sustainable livelihood.

I came back to Canada inspired and hopeful for the renewal of PWS&D's programs in Malawi, a country dear to the hearts of all Presbyterians in Canada.



Village volunteers, including grandmothers, gathered to share with us about how they go about their home visits to promote healthy behaviours, help to prevent child marriages, and raise awareness on sexual and reproductive health issues.

Women in Nepal Grow Income, Confidence and Voice

By Babita Luitel and
Srijana Moktan, community
motivators at Women for Peace
and Democracy Nepal

In the rural hills of Makwanpur district, Nepal, women from marginalized communities are building a future rooted in dignity, resilience and hope. Through the project Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER), supported by PWS&D, 176 women have come together in six Village Women's Groups (VWGs) to strengthen their economic independence,

leadership and collective voice.

Raj Kumari Rai, 60, from Lamitar in Manahari Rural Municipality, reflects the transformative power of opportunity. For years, she lacked confidence and depended entirely on her family for financial support. When the Lalupatey Village Women's Group was formed, she joined hesitantly. Through training and encouragement, she began to see new possibilities.

With support from the project, Raj Kumari received a plastic tunnel to grow vegetables and took a small loan to buy tomato seeds. She earned approximately Rs.

35,000 from her harvest—her first independent income. Her husband now supports her farming activities, a shift that symbolizes deeper change within the household.

"I have learned to speak confidently and share my problems," she said. "Now I earn from vegetable farming and plan to expand into pig farming. I am grateful for this opportunity."

The project has also fostered environmental stewardship. Women are practicing organic farming, reusing household water for irrigation and adopting cli-

mate-resilient techniques. These changes not only protect the land but also improve family nutrition and income stability.

Nepal continues to face deep economic and social inequalities. Women, especially from Dalit and Indigenous communities, have limited access to education, financial services and land ownership. In rural areas, climate change has further disrupted agriculture-based livelihoods, increasing economic insecurity and household stress.

The POWER project, initiated by Women for Peace and Democracy



Sanumaya Thokar has started a poultry farm and is able to support her family, since joining a PWS&D project in her community.

Nepal and supported by PWS&D, addresses these interconnected challenges through a holistic approach: training in micro-enterprise management, livestock and poultry raising, organic farming, cooperative education and finan-

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Continued from page 32

cial literacy. Women also participate in regular group meetings where they save together, access small loans and build solidarity across caste lines.

The results in the first year have been remarkable. Nearly all participating women report increased confidence in household decision-making. Many have opened bank or cooperative accounts in their own names. Others have registered businesses and even land ownership, important milestones in a context where women have traditionally had limited control over assets.

Building social harmony through women's empowerment

When women gather in the villages of Makwanpur, their meetings are filled with discussion, laughter and determination. What began as small savings groups under the POWER project has become a movement toward social harmony and inclusive leadership.

At the heart of the initiative are six Village Women's Groups. These groups meet monthly to save collectively, discuss social concerns and plan income-generating activities. Through cornerstone training and leadership development sessions, women learn about mutual respect, accountability and shared responsibility—values that strengthen both families and communities.

Sanumaya Thokar, 44, from Goganpani, once spent her days solely on household chores. She had little exposure to community activities and no independent source of income. After joining the Pragati Village Women's Group, she attended livestock and organic farming trainings and began applying her new knowledge.

With project support, she built a plastic tunnel and invested in tomato and eggplant farming. She later restarted poultry farming using improved techniques learned during training. Her efforts generated significant profit, enabling her to reinvest and expand her business independently.

"With the support of the POWER project, I gained the skills and confidence to earn and support my family," Sanumaya shared. "Now I am economically empowered and planning to grow even more."

Her journey illustrates how economic empowerment strengthens voice and leadership. Today, women from the village women's groups serve as chairpersons, secretaries and committee members in community bodies. They raise issues of gender equality in ward meetings and collaborate with local government offices to access agricultural services and resources.

Participation in community meetings has risen dramatically, and women report that their opinions are respected at home and in public forums. Cooperative education has enabled many to join local cooperatives, strengthening financial inclusion and sustainability.

The transformation extends beyond economics. In the early stages of the project, some women faced resistance from family members for attending meetings. Through dialogue and engagement, attitudes shifted. Men increasingly recognize the value of women's participation, sharing household responsibilities and supporting their leadership.

By combining skills training, financial inclusion, environmental awareness and advocacy, POWER demonstrates that women's empowerment is foundational to peaceful, resilient communities.

These stories are a testament to the impact of global solidarity. Through the partnership of PWS&D and local leadership in Nepal, women are moving from silence to confidence, from dependence to entrepreneurship, and from exclusion to leadership—building a more just and harmonious future for all.



"I have learned to speak confidently and share my problems," said Raj Kumari Rai, after participating in a PWS&D project where she gained leadership skills.

Love in Action in Nepal



A community women's group stands in front of their greenhouse, something purchased as part of a PWS&D-supported project.

By the Rev. Shabrizad Kandalaft, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., and co-convenor of the PWS&D Committee

In January 2026, I travelled to Nepal with Maria Carmona, PWS&D's Asia program coordinator, to visit communities supported through PWS&D and its partners.

As we travelled through mountains, villages and remote areas, I began to understand how difficult daily life can be. What looks close on a map can take many hours to reach. People walk long distances every day for school and every day basic needs. This stayed with me.

But more than the challenges, I saw strength, kindness and hope.

The work of PWS&D is not done alone. The work happens through local partners in Nepal, and through the support of people here in Canada—church members, donors, volunteers and friends who give, pray and care. What we saw in Nepal is possible because of this shared support.

Through Women for Peace and Democracy (WPD), I met women who are learning skills and becoming stronger in their daily lives. They are raising animals, growing food and learning to manage small savings groups. These simple skills are helping their families. (You can read more about WPD's work in another article in this issue.)

One woman, Dawa, started with a small loan and four goats. Today, she has more animals, and this helps her family with food,

school costs and daily needs. Another woman told us that selling milk helped her send her children to school.

What stayed with me was the confidence of these women. They support each other and share what they learn. This is the kind of change that happens through your support—small steps that bring real hope.

In a very remote area called Bhani, we saw the work of International Nepal Fellowship (INF). To reach these villages, staff walk many hours through mountains. They go because people there need support. They teach simple but important things about clean water, hygiene, farming, animal care and how to prepare for disasters.

I met Sonia, a team leader who teaches these skills. She is patient and kind. Families trust her and listen to her. With the support

provided, little by little, life becomes better in these communities. In these moments, I thought, "This is love in action."

We also visited hospitals and rehabilitation programs supported by INF. People receive care for illness, leprosy, disability and injury. But the work does not stop at the hospital doors. Staff also go into communities, find people in need and help them rebuild their lives.

Some people learn to walk again. Some receive help to rebuild their homes. Some learn skills so they can earn an income. This is not only medical care. It is care for the whole person. And this work is also possible because of PWS&D support.

Throughout the trip, I was reminded that PWS&D is a work of partnership. It connects people in Canada with communities in Nepal through care, prayer and giving. Because of your support, this work continues in places that are hard to reach.

As I think back on this trip, I remember children walking long paths to school, women building small incomes and families helping each other in hard conditions.

But I also think of you, the supporters of this work. You may not see these places, but your support makes a real difference in their lives.

This reminded me that mission is shared work. We do it together. God is already at work in these communities, and we are invited to be part of it.

I returned to Canada, thankful and encouraged. And I saw this clearly: *love in action*.



The Rev. Shahrzad Kandalaft, second from right, with a village women's group during a recent PWS&D global partner visit to Nepal.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Innovating Today to Nourish Tomorrow



Since joining the project, Regina is able to support her family by selling her excess farm produce.

By Emma Goldstein,
PWS&D Communications

October 16 marks World Food Day. This year's theme, "Innovate Today. Nourish Tomorrow" encourages us to think about and support the new techniques that many farmers and their communities are embracing, hand-in-hand with traditional approaches to agriculture. We come alongside our neighbours near and far—in prayer, through advocacy and with our financial gifts—as they work to increase their food security and safeguard the planet for future generations.

Margarita is one such farmer. A single mother, she also cares for a half-sister with a developmental

disorder, as well as her two nephews. "There are quite a few of us in the house and we don't have much land to cultivate," she explained.

In the Quetzaltenango region of Guatemala, where Margarita lives, many Indigenous farmers experience food insecurity. Households seek to grow their own food on farms that are too small to meet their daily needs. Even where space is available to plant their usual varieties of corn, beans, squash and herbs, often the soil is degraded due to overuse and the effects of climate change and does not produce good yields.

Like many of her neighbours, Margarita must travel to access enough productive land to grow

food for her family. "What we harvest is not enough for the whole year. For this reason, we have to go out to look for work with the neighbours and we also go to the coast to plant corn on land that we pay to rent."

Her peer Regina Delgado Vásquez also takes part in seasonal migration, leaving her home to go to the coast and plant corn. A wife and mother of adult children, all members of her family of five engage in agriculture on their one-hectare plot of land.

Both Margarita and Regina were selected to lead their communities toward food security, through a PWS&D program with partner *Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Mayas*. The agriculture and livelihoods project trains women to become ecological promoters in sustainable agriculture techniques. It invites them to innovate today, in order to nourish their families and communities tomorrow.

For Margarita, participating in PWS&D's food security project resulted in having consistent food for her family, and sharing her newly learned techniques with others. "Now I plant my vegetables, even if it's only a few, because *Fraternidad* is training me. The technician and the educator have taught me how to grow vegetables. I planted my fruit trees that the project gave me, and now I can vaccinate my chickens."

Regina explained the difference being involved in the project made in her life: "With the little land I have around the house I have been able to plant some vegetables and herbs for my consumption. I have learned to take care of my chickens that are useful for my consumption."

Through the program, both Margarita and Regina also learned about food safety. Now, they boil the water their families consume to avoid diseases. Margarita also grows medicinal plants in her vegetable garden, which her family consumes to stay healthy.

Regina likes to sell what she

produces, especially her surplus herbs. She is also engaged in other productive activities to improve her financial situation, with the dream of one day owning her own house.

Both Margarita and Regina have passed along what they have learned about soil conservation, sustainable agriculture, livestock rearing and forestry techniques to others. Their story is just one example of how innovative solutions, combined with traditional knowledge and inclusive approaches, can help ensure that everyone has access to sufficient, diverse, safe and nutritious food.



"I learned how to prepare nutritious foods to eat healthier, taking advantage of the food produced in my community," said Margarita after participating in a PWS&D project.

Aid for Afghan Returnees

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

While the United Nations states that there are approximately 770,000 Afghan refugees in Iran, the Norwegian Refugee Council estimates that number is closer to four million when undocumented refugees and migrants are included. Every day, since the start of U.S. military strikes on Iran, thousands of Afghans have

returned to Afghanistan—under extremely difficult conditions and placing additional pressure on already fragile border areas and host communities.

Food insecurity in Afghanistan is being driven by a combination of factors, including ongoing economic crises, poor harvests for the predominantly small-scale farmers, high inflation and high unemployment. Forced returns of Afghan refugees and

migrants from Pakistan and Iran over the last two years has also been a major contributing factor. The recent military strikes across Iran have only made the situation worse.

Many returnees arrive back in Afghanistan suddenly, with few assets, limited documentation and immediate need for aid. The situation is exponentially harder for women under the Taliban. They face severe barriers to

earning an income and participating in normal social activities.

In response, PWS&D is working with its partner in Afghanistan, to provide cash transfers to 1,180 households (reaching approximately 8,295 people) to allow them to buy food, which is available at local markets. This project is supported through Canadian Foodgrains Bank, with matching funds from the Government of Canada.

Project participants are identified based on need, with particular focus on aiding those with no income-earning potential; households with pregnant and lactating women, elderly members or persons with disabilities; and women-headed returnee households.

To support this project, please visit [WeRespond.ca/donate](https://www.werespond.ca/donate) and select "Afghanistan Relief" in the drop-down menu.



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A Continuing Concern: the Israel-Palestine Working Group



By Linda Taffs and Sara avMaat, former members of Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC), who continue to volunteer on its Israel/Palestine working group. CFSC is the national peace and social justice agency of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada. This article first appeared at quakerconcern.ca in the spring

Authors Linda Taffs and Sara avMaat are members of an ad hoc ecumenical/interfaith group of Canadians scattered across the country called Canada Stand Up for Palestinian Children's Rights (CSUFPCR), which originated in 2020. This article is one of many written by members of this group whose focus is to encourage the Government of Canada to act on its commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and to follow through on the recommendations of 18 MPs who visited Palestine in 2018. One of the recommendations in the MPs report requested Canada to appoint a special envoy to monitor the treatment of Palestinian children by the Israeli military. However, before the 2018 report

with its recommendations could be considered, Parliament was prorogued and an election called. Over the years, CSUFPCR has continued to remind the Government of Canada of the situation Palestinian children face under the increasingly violent Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Recently, the group submitted a petition, Petition E-7580, to the Office of Private Members Bill concerning this rapidly deteriorating situation. The petition is now live and can receive Canadian signatures until Oct. 11, 2026.

Presbyterians Gordon Timbers, Dorothy Herbert and Dorcas Gordon have been members of CSUFPCR from the beginning.

The roots of the Israel-Palestine Working Group (IPWG) go back to 2012, when a small group began meeting informally to discern how to respond to the situation unfolding in Palestine and Israel. That group moved quickly from reflection to action. They were instrumental in drafting a minute of support for the boycott of Israeli settlement goods for the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in

Canada. This was approved in 2014 as an Addendum to the 2009 Minute of Record on peace in Israel and Palestine (both available at QuakerService.ca/Israel-Palestine).

In 2015, that ad hoc group formalized its work and the IPWG was officially established as a volunteer working group under the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC). The IPWG brings together Friends from across the country who meet monthly by video call, deepening our understanding and discerning how to act on issues such as Palestinian children held in Israeli military detention, Canadian-Israeli military trade, and boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).

IPWG's work has included drafting a 2016 statement that was accepted at the governing meeting of all Quaker meetings in Canada, calling on Canada to refuse arms sales to countries that may use them in violation of international law or to suppress civilian populations. The statement urged Canada to sign and ratify the UN Arms Trade Treaty and called on Canada to move from backing wars to supporting

creative, non-military approaches to building peace.

In 2020, IPWG helped instigate Parliamentary e-petition 2667, calling on the Canadian Government to send a special envoy to monitor the treatment of Palestinian children by the Israeli military—a recommendation from 18 Canadian Members of Parliament (MPs) who visited the region in 2018. When the government responded, it claimed to already be monitoring the situation. But monitoring without action is not enough. Canada signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and we believe those obligations must be honoured in practice, not merely in words.

In 2025, the IPWG put forward the apartheid-free communities' pledge to monthly meetings across Canada, succeeding in gathering supporting minutes of record from more than half.

The children we cannot forget

One aspect of IPWG's ongoing concern is a reality that is difficult to sit with: between 500 and 1,000 Palestinian children are detained by Israeli military forces each year. Most are pros-

ecuted in military courts, which don't afford the same protections as civilian courts. Children as young as 12 can be tried in this system, most commonly for alleged stone-throwing. Over half of detained children are arrested at night. The majority report physical and psychological abuse during arrest and interrogation. In military courts, the conviction rate is 95%.

Shadi Khoury, who was a student at the Ramallah Friends School, was written about in a Spring 2023 Quaker Concern article. In 2022, when Shadi was 16, Israeli police entered his home in East Jerusalem, beat him and dragged him away barefoot, blindfolded and bleeding. After years of proceedings, Shadi—now an adult—was sentenced to 32 months in prison. He has consistently maintained his innocence, and other youths who testified against him later reported that their statements had been coerced under duress. Shadi's case is not an exception. It is, heartbreakingly, part of a clear pattern.

As of September, 168 Palestinian children were being held in administrative detention—meaning they hadn't been charged with any crime. Reports document torture, and at least one child died due to inadequate food and medical care. For years now, the International Committee of the Red Cross has been unable to visit any Palestinian detainees in Israeli detention facilities, removing a critical layer of oversight and protection.

IPWG's work continues—in monthly meetings, in advocacy, and in keeping this concern alive. We invite you to join us in asking the Canadian Government to go beyond monitoring and to act in accordance with its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Write to your MP, raise the concern in your community, and learn more through the organizations doing careful, documented work on the ground: Military Court Watch (militarycourtwatch.org) and Palestinian Center for Children's Rights (pccr.ps).

“Over half of detained children are arrested at night. The majority report physical and psychological abuse during arrest and interrogation.”

Connection with Creation for Flourishing Churches

Adapted from Improving Church: Scripture as the Source of Harmony, Rhythm, and Soul written by the Rev. Dr. Mark R. Glanville, director of the Centre for Missional Leadership, St. Andrew's Hall in Vancouver, B.C.

In the coming years, creation will be a centring theme for thriving churches. As society becomes increasingly post-Christian, our growing awareness of our interconnectedness with creation and our responsibility toward it will be a key and integrating characteristic for discipleship.

Spiritually alive churches will seek to live, garden, work and eat thoughtfully in relation to creation, aware of their interdependence with all of creation. To use a music analogy, creation will be the “key” that we play in, even as Jesus is our tune.

This is illustrated in the experience of my friend, Leah Kostamo. Leah is a co-founder of A Rocha Canada, a Christian non-governmental environmental stewardship organization that engages in conservation, environmental education and sustainable agriculture.

Leah presented at the University of Ottawa with a talk titled,

“The Future of Religion in Canada: Utopia and Dystopia?” (See arocha.ca/his-eye-is-on-the-sucker.) Margaret Atwood, arguably Canada’s most renowned novelist, also spoke. Leah told the story of an intern at an A Rocha farm. The intern awoke one morning with conviction that God would surprise her that day. (An onlooker commented that when Leah said this, “You could feel the skepticism rise from the crowd.”)

Later that day on a routine fish count in the Little Campbell River, the intern gathered a fish that was an endangered species, the Salish sucker. This species hadn’t been observed in the vicinity for years! Leah reflected on God’s part in this story: “His eye is on the sucker,” she said, using the words of an old hymn.

This phrase was repeated throughout the event by both speakers: “His eye is on the sucker.” Leah’s witness was not only authentic, but it was also compelling.

Through Leah’s example, God showed us once again that living into Christ’s way and speaking authentically from that place is beautiful, and is often warmly received, even as it also challenges.



Leah Kostamo, Margaret Atwood, Graeme Gibson and Markku Kostamo on a tour of A Rocha’s BC Environmental Centre in Surrey. PHOTO CREDITS: A ROCHA CANADA

Stories like this make me reflect: becoming conscious of our connection with creation can reawaken the vitality and witness of Christian communities. As we journey more deeply into post-Christian culture, creation can be a centring reality connecting many aspects of Christian discipleship within flourishing churches.

Human kinship with creation

Creation plays a central role in scripture. Humanity is not related to the creation as *other* than the creation but as a *part* of the creation. We are made from the dust of the earth: God takes the *adam* from the *adama* (soil; Genesis 2:7). Humanity comes from soil, returns to soil and is always related to soil. This is a mutuality of being, what sociologists refer to as “kinship”: humankind is kin with the non-human creation. We are made of the same material; our fortunes are entangled.

Reintegrating discipleship

Almost every aspect of discipleship connects with creation, expressing humanity’s bond with other creatures. Creation and environmental issues are related to the social, emotional, spiritual, economic and physical dimensions of our lives. Let me describe some ways in which creation can be a centring reality for many aspects of discipleship.

For one, Leah Kostamo’s experience has shown us how intimacy with creation opens a door for genuine conversation about Jesus.

Second, the theme of hope. It is well known that young people sometimes lack hope for the future. If violence against humanity colours how Gen-Z understands the past, violence against creation effects how they anticipate the future. In her talk, Leah repeatedly returned to the theme of hope: the “Christian message is one of hope,” she said. Leah acknowledged that some will think that hope is “Pollyannaish,” yet the resurrection of Christ grounds Christian hope. And there in Ottawa it was the Christian community of A Rocha Canada, with its thick connection with creation, that gave Christian hope plausibility and form.

Third, in an era when faith is vulnerable and must be nourished with care, faith in God can be strengthened as we become aware of our connection with creation, our responsibility to care for creation, and the privilege of being cared for by creation. We see this in the biblical character of Job, for example. In the midst of Job’s darkest hour, he is reoriented in relation to God by considering the grandeur and intimate wonder of creation (Job 38–41).

We see a link between faith and creation also in the creation Psalms, where creation leads the psalmist to praise God (Psalm 104; 148). A note for worship leaders: we shouldn’t settle for merely restating the creation Psalms word-for-word, since they arose from the ecosystem of Syria-Palestine. But we can encounter God anew when we

inquire into the unique ways our ecosystem reveals God. Can you write songs that name the trees and mountains in your local ecosystem? In this way, we are following the psalmist’s example.

Fourth, creation can connect us to scripture. Author and poet Wendell Berry is right to say that the Bible is an “outdoor book” (see *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, p. 103). We can connect with the Bible more deeply as we become more aware of our connection with the creation.

Fifth, it seems that people who seek to learn about creation tend to naturally adopt a learning posture toward Indigenous people as the ancient custodians of the land. First Nations’ wisdom for “walking in a good way on the land” begins with the awareness that they don’t own the land, but they belong to it. This resonates with what we see in Genesis 2:7—humankind are taken from the *adamah*.

Sixth, and most importantly, we encounter Christ in creation, for as Irenaeus put it, the incarnation is a “recapitulation of creation.” Norman Wirzba summarizes Irenaeus, reflecting that Jesus entered “fully into the life of humanity and all creation so as to heal and transform it from within” (see *From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World*, p. 23).

The church can nourish a deep and vital faith by recovering our relationship with the land, creation, as an integrating node for discipleship.



Leah Kostamo (left) and Margaret Atwood at a presentation at the University of Ottawa.

Beginning Again: For Ministers Starting a New Chapter

The following information was presented to pastoral leaders on July 4 by the Rev. Daniel Surya. A 2021 study by Christian research organization Barna Group revealed that 70% of ministers feel unprepared for transitioning into a new congregation. The following short devotional and reflection guide was designed to assist during this time of change. A PDF is available at bit.ly/beginning-again-pdf

The key themes of this resource are:

- Navigating change: Embracing transitions fosters growth and resilience in pastoral leadership and congregational dynamics
- Pastoral well-being: Prioritizing self-care ensures sustainable ministry and enhances the ability to serve congregants effectively.
- Building community: Establishing connections within the new congregation strengthens ties and cultivates a supportive environment.

The grief of leaving

Leaving a familiar community can evoke profound grief for ministers as they navigate the emotional complexities of farewell. Paul's experience illustrates the deep ties and heartache often felt during transitions. Understanding this disenfranchised grief is essential for new leaders. It encourages connection and healing, framing the journey forward not as an ending but as a new beginning filled with promise.

Building relationships: trust before change

Earning trust is essential for new ministers. Like Moses and Jesus, building relationships takes time and intentionality, fostering a strong foundation before implementing changes to existing systems. Understanding congregants' names and stories cultivates connection. This initial investment not only enhances relationships but also paves the way for effective ministry, ensuring that changes are embraced rather than resisted.

Comparisons cut both ways: embracing contentment

New ministers often find themselves grappling with the temptation to compare their new congregation to their previous experiences, which can create feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction. Paul's journey teaches us that contentment is key; rather than focusing on what is lacking, embracing the present and its unique opportunities fosters a healthier transition and growth in ministry.

Building trust: focus on relationships over numbers

Building trust is essential for ministers as they transition into new congregations. Just as Jesus focused on nurturing 12 relationships, new leaders should prioritize personal connections over larger crowds. Through intentional relationship building, ministers can create a supportive environment that fosters growth

and faith. By following Jesus' example, they cultivate a ministry rooted in trust and understanding, essential for effective leadership.

Leading with humility: earning authority through service

In the life of Jesus, service before authority was paramount. By washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus taught the importance of humility and the profound power that comes from serving others. New ministers must embrace this principle. Building relationships through service allows leaders to earn respect and trust, creating a solid foundation for influence when it's time to lead from the front.

Calling again: finding meaning in your new ministry

Embracing the unknown can be challenging yet transformative for new ministers, as they seek to find meaning and purpose in their calling, drawing inspiration from Abraham's journey of faith. As you step into a fresh chapter, it's essential to recognize that each new place offers unique opportunities for growth and connection, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of your purpose.

Milestones to consider

There are six key phases essential for a smooth transition into your new congregation. Each phase serves as a guide to help you navigate the process effectively, ensuring you build strong relationships, establish trust and foster a positive ministry environment. Embrace these milestones as a pathway to a successful new chapter in your pastoral journey.

- Phase 1: assess needs
- Phase 2: establish relationships
- Phase 3: develop vision
- Phase 4: implement plans
- Phase 5: celebrate milestones
- Phase 6: evaluate progress

Remember, you don't have to navigate this transition alone. Consider reaching out to a trusted colleague in your presbytery, a Session member who has walked this road before, or a fellow minister who understands what it means to begin again.



Safe Church: Reminders and Policy Updates

Everyone who participates in the life of the PCC has a responsibility to contribute to fostering respect and safety in church spaces. Reading *Leading with Care* and the Policy and Procedures for Addressing Harassment and Workplace Violence at least once per year helps church leaders prevent harm and respond appropriately when misconduct occurs. As your Session, ministry board, presbytery or committee plans when this annual review will occur, you can visit presbyterian.ca/safety to access the most up-to-date versions of the denomination's safety policies. This page also contains resources to aid with reviewing knowledge about the policies and to communicate about the policies.

Providing transparent information to church members and the public is essential to ensuring that these policies and procedures are fair and equitable. The 2026 General Assembly directed all ministries to have a prominent place on their website that explains the church's safety policies and indicates the process for raising a concern and filing an informed complaint. One way to do this is to provide a link to presbyterian.ca/safe-church and a list of two or more people who can be contacted to raise a complaint (i.e., minister, clerk of Session, executive director, convener, etc.).

The Policy for Dealing with Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment is currently under review by the Life and Mission Agency. If you would like to provide comments or suggestions about the policy, you are encouraged to contact the Rev. Tim Purvis, Ministry and Church Vocations (tpurvis@presbyterian.ca) or the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald, General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency (imcdonald@presbyterian.ca).



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BOOK REVIEWS

Doctor Sahib and Me

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

*Doctor Sahib and Me: Two Years
as a Missionary Family in India*
Written by Tom Carter, 2025

The British historian Raphael Samuel, in a 1985 *History Today* magazine feature, made the astute observation that social history “prides itself on being concerned with ‘real life’ rather than abstractions, with ‘ordinary’ people rather than privileged elites, with everyday things rather than sensational events.”

Though Samuel is associated with Marxist thinking in postwar Britain, his commentary on social history is a good lesson for Canadian Presbyterians (and indeed other Christians) to take note of. It is very tempting to focus our energies on telling the “big stories”—George Leslie Mackay, Church Union and congregational growth in postwar suburbia, to name three—while the lesser-known stories sit quietly on the sidelines, waiting for their time in the sun.

That’s why books such as Tom Carter’s *Doctor Sahib and Me: Two Years as a Missionary Family*

in India are timely and important. For what readers will encounter in this self-published memoir are not merely feel-good reflections on the PCC’s overseas mission efforts, but a deeply personal, even raw commentary on the challenges and frustrations (and yes, joys) faced by one particular medical missionary and his young family from 1963 through 1965.

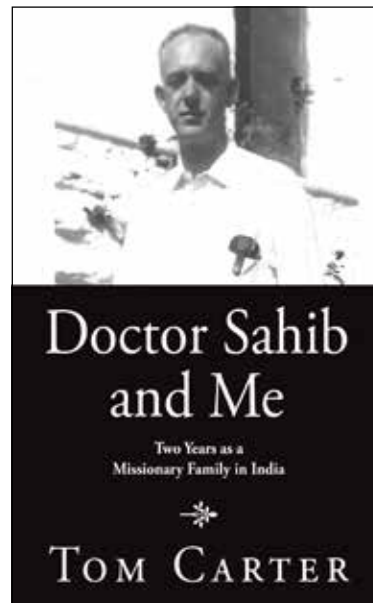
Tom’s father, Dr. Arnold Carter, was a highly respected family physician from Windsor, Ontario. Seeking a change of professional scenery in the early 1960s, Dr. Carter investigated opportunities to serve as a medical missionary abroad. Although a member of the United Church of Canada, Dr. Carter was not enthusiastic about the latter’s requirement for a five-year commitment in an overseas mission field. He thus approached The Presbyterian Church in Canada, which apparently had a more flexible opportunity for which Dr. Carter would be ideally suited—or so he and his family thought.

In describing his family’s experiences, author Tom Carter is very open about the fact that his father’s time in India—where he was known by the colonial term, “Sahib,” which means “friend”

or “master”—was marred and undermined by a perfect storm of factors. A strong-willed man, Dr. Carter went to India with the understanding that he would be implementing radical changes at the Jobat Christian Hospital to modernize its services, improve its efficiency and, eventually, set it on a course toward local control by the community it served. Alas, he soon found himself up against infighting among professional missionaries, an unscrupulous treasurer, and a Toronto-based PCC Board of Overseas Missions that—in his view—failed to adequately address or respond to his concerns.

Interestingly, Dr. Carter didn’t consider himself to be especially religious. Tom makes this clear on pages 129–130: “I have found no evidence that religion was part of his upbringing. If his parents went to church, or if he went to Sunday school as a kid, that was never mentioned... Dad’s mission was to bring JCH up to the highest standard possible and to prepare it for the transformation to self-governance.”

This encapsulates one of the book’s recurring themes: is faith and church membership merely about assenting to a litany of ab-



stract theological formulas, or is it about intuitively applying the teachings of God Incarnate to real life? Dr. Carter personified the latter, even though his patience was routinely tested as he waded through the waters of ecclesiastical bureaucracy.

Moreover, the Carter family’s involvement in church mirrored a common experience throughout the 1960s. As Stuart Macdonald pointed out in a recent Substack article, “People belonged and attended because that reinforced a particular place in society. Respectable people went to church. If you owned a business on the main street of your town, being seen in church (even occasionally) showed you were respectable.” This is made obvious on

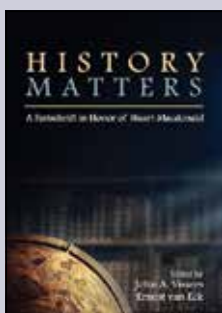
page 85, when—writing in his father’s voice—Tom says, “It’s important for a family doctor to be known and seen in the community, after all, and many of the folks there [at church] are patients.”

Even though Dr. Carter didn’t wear his faith on his sleeve, there can be no question that divine providence manifested itself in his life. Arnold Carter grew up in a poor farming family, and was encouraged by his maternal grandfather, John Melick, to pursue medicine—even to the point of the latter paying for university tuition. Unfortunately, Mr. Melick died in 1944 and with his death, Arnold found himself unable to cover the costs of medical school. A story on page 9 relates how a kindly storekeeper handed the aspiring physician a paper bag filled with 352 dollar bills—a year’s tuition at the University of Western Ontario’s school of medicine. This story has an almost parable-like quality about it: God works through ordinary people to make extraordinary things happen.

Ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the face of great difficulty. That is *Doctor Sahib and Me* in a nutshell. It is a leisurely read—and a much-appreciated addition to the canon of PCC missionary history.

Visit pagemasterpublishing.ca to learn more.

History Matters: A Festschrift in Honor of Stuart Macdonald



Edited by John A. Vissers and Ernest van Eck
Pickwick Publications, 2026

History Matters: A Festschrift in Honor of Stuart Macdonald is a new book that brings together distinguished scholars whose essays span diverse periods and contexts, yet converge around enduring theological and historical questions. Across studies of witch trials in sixteenth-century Scotland; demonological debates in seventeenth-century England; moral reasoning about wartime bombing, secularization, and doctrinal development in

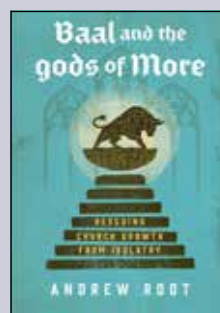
Canadian Protestantism; and the formation of medieval church leaders, the contributors examine how Christian identity has been formed, contested and reimagined over time.

This volume attends closely to the dynamics of power and authority in both ecclesial and civic life and to the ongoing negotiation between tradition and transformation. It also insists that historical inquiry is never neutral. The questions historians ask, the sources they privilege, and the interpretive frameworks they employ shape how the past is understood. Rather than offering easy conclusions, these essays present history as complex, contested and often unresolved.

As a whole, *History Matters* demonstrates why careful historical study remains indispensable for rigorous theological reflection and for responsible engagement with the moral, social and ecclesial challenges of the present.

Visit wipfandstock.com to learn more.

Baal and the Gods of More: Rescuing Church Growth from Idolatry



Written by Andrew Root
Baker Academic, 2026

In an era of decline, pastors and ministry leaders face intense pressure to grow—more attendance, more influence, more reach, more budget. But what if this relentless pursuit of “more” is actually a form of modern idolatry?

In *Baal and the Gods of More*, theologian Andrew Root challenges everything you thought you knew about church growth and success. Root reveals how Protestant churches have become dangerously

dependent on growth-driven stabilization, a mindset inherited from the industrial revolution’s golden era. He draws striking parallels between ancient Israel’s worship of Baal and other fertility gods and the contemporary church’s obsession with expansion. Just as the Israelites turned to false gods promising abundance, today’s church often looks to secular methodologies, innovation strategies and growth techniques as saviours.

This provocative book argues that creativity, innovation and endless strategizing won’t save declining churches. Instead, Root calls the church back to dependence on divine action and genuine relational encounter with the Word of God.

This book is perfect for pastors, church leaders, students and anyone concerned about authentic ministry in a post-Christian culture. It offers a theologically grounded path forward that trades growth metrics for God’s presence.

Visit bakeracademic.com to learn more.

REFLECTIONS

The Present Crisis LXXV

This post appeared on "The Present Crisis," a blog by the Rev. Philip J. Lee, found at medium.com/@pjlee_39329

I have the awful feeling that the blasphemies of the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement are being accepted as norm. We hear on an almost daily basis that Donald J. Trump is God's chosen instrument and that MAGA is fulfilling all God's purposes for the nation and the world. Even those of us who don't believe any of these preposterous claims have heard them so many times that we are no longer shocked.

At the 10th annual meeting of the Faith and Freedom Coalition held last month in Washington, D.C., Ralph Reed, among the most prominent Evangelical leaders in America, told the huge audience: "They impeached him (President Trump), they indicted him, they tried to imprison him, they tried to knock him off the ballot and then they tried to kill him. And it all failed because God has

a purpose for this man and it is to save our nation."

Notice that Reed equates the lawful impeachment of the President with assassination attempts. In Reed's statement, Liz Cheney is no longer a Republican Congresswoman who had the courage to vote with her conscience, she is reduced to one of "they" who tried to kill the President. Reed also equates the American legal system with "they" who tried to kill President Trump. Special Counsel Robert Mueller is equated with Thomas Matthew Crooks, the probably mentally ill twenty-year-old who tried to assassinate Trump in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

"They" tried everything, but failed because Trump was God's choice.

What may be more offensive than the claims of Divine support for the President is Trump and MAGA's disdain for humanity. Surely the Incarnation of Jesus has to do with God's love for humanity. Karl Barth linked

the Incarnation with the *election* of human beings through God's election of Jesus.

The MAGA forces are saying that not all of humanity is elected by God. They make it quite clear by word and deed that only right-thinking, Trump-supporting Republicans will fit that category. Thus, they endorse Trump's characterization of "others" as "hard core, Godless Communists," "animals," "vermin." He recently identified the Iranians as "scum."

And yet Jesus warns his disciples not to make judgements against fellow humans. "Judge not, lest you be judged." He taught us to ask God to "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us."

So, as followers of Jesus we are not allowed to write off any human being. If any human being is *un-elected*, that verdict can only be rendered by the Almighty, certainly not by us fellow mortals.

The judgement against humankind has awful consequences. When, in the 1930s, the Nazis

declared the Jews were "vermin," what followed was the Holocaust. When the President of the United States called the Iranians "vicious animals," "vermin," he also promised: "We're going to bomb them back to the Stone Age where they belong." "We're going to wipe out an entire generation in one night."

And now, that threat against a civilian population, which in itself is a war crime, is being carried out. At present, the United States is bombing bridges, power plants and even de-salinization plants, all essential life supports for the Iranian people. Again, bad theology leads to tragic consequences. "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar" (1 John 4:20a NIV).

The encouraging news is that Pope Leo XIV, the first American Pope, is holding fast to the biblical respect for humanity and for each human being. In his first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, he upholds the creation and redemption of humanity as God's sacred act. The encyclical is indeed a cel-



ebration of humanity in the face of many threats and dangers.

He maintains that the treatment of immigrants and refugees is a "litmus test" of a nation's sense of social justice. And he argues that the Just War theories of the earlier church no longer apply because our weapons have become so destructive of entire populations that war must be avoided by all available means. A "civilization of love" must be the alternative to a "culture of power." And the Pope has not been afraid to say that "Peace is threatened by the whims of the wealthy and powerful."

Ordinary Christians who have been so disheartened by the MAGA ascendancy can now be encouraged by the heroic honesty of the Bishop of Rome.



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JUST WONDERING...



Have a question? Send it to connection@presbyterian.ca

Can a minister act as an executor for a church member's will or as their power of attorney?

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

There is no denominational rule or direction on this matter. It is up to ministers, individuals and families working together to make the best decisions in each situation. Great

care should be taken to make every effort to avoid conflicts of interest that may arise. It would not be appropriate, in some cases, for ministers to act as a power of attorney or executor; consulting with a lawyer is essential.

Individuals should think carefully about who in their life has the skills, gifts, time and resources

to serve as an executor and/or power of attorney. Ministers should also think wisely about their time, ability, responsibilities and circumstances. And lawyers are always an important source of advice, insight and good sense. Several lawyers I spoke with who help write wills noted that it is often wise, in many circumstances,

to name co-executors and co-powers of attorney for the sake of transparency and so responsibilities aren't borne by one person. Having co-executors and co-powers of attorney can also ensure there is at least someone in place in the case one of the trusted people isn't able to act as an executor when the time comes. Repeatedly,

lawyers, physicians and financial advisors I spoke with mentioned the importance of seeking advice, laying out your wishes and communicating them clearly. In all things, great care should be taken to be as transparent and open as possible to avoid the ability to exercise any undue influence or the appearance of undue influence.

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(full-time minister)

Grand Valley, ON – Knox
(part-time minister)

Guelph, ON – Knox
(full-time lead minister)

Huntsville, ON – St. Andrew's
(full-time minister)

Kitchener, ON – St. Andrew's
(full-time lead minister)

Kleinburg, ON – Cornerstone Community (part-time children's ministry worker/leader)

Markham, ON – Celebration
(full-time minister)

Milton, ON – Nassagaweya
(full- or part-time minister)

North Bay, ON – Calvin
(full-time minister)

Orillia, ON – St. Mark's
(full-time minister)

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

Toronto, ON – Cornerstone
(full-time minister)

Toronto, ON – Mimico
3/4-time minister)

Vaughan, ON – Vaughan Community (full-time contract, pastor of young adult ministry and mission)

Southwestern Ontario

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

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

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

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

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

Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario

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

Saskatchewan
Regina, SK – Norman Kennedy
(full-time minister)

Alberta & the Northwest

Edmonton, AB – First
(full-time minister)

Edmonton, AB – Mill Woods
(full-time minister)

Presbytery of the Northwest – Regional Minister (full-time)

St. Albert, AB – Braeside
(3/4-time minister)

Sylvan Lake, AB – Memorial
(full-time minister)

British Columbia

Burnaby, BC – Trinity
(full-time minister)

Campbell River, BC – Trinity
(full-time minister)

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

Maple Ridge, BC – Haney
(full-time minister)

Victoria, BC – St. Andrew's
(full-time minister)

White Rock, BC – St. John's
(full-time minister)

DEATH NOTICES

Read full obituaries online
at presbyterian.ca

The Rev. Jo-Anne (Nichols) Symington
Deceased May 17, 2026
Watford, Ont.

The Rev. Joyce Elder
Deceased May 19, 2026
London, Ont.

Dr. Mary Wilma Welsh

Deceased June 4, 2026
Guelph, Ont.

Dr. Wilma Welsh lived an extraordinary life that touched many. Her faith was made real through action, presence and love. She was born July 9, 1937, in Blackland, N.B. The family moved to Guelph, Ont., when she was young. Growing up, Knox Presbyterian Church became an important part of her life.

Wilma gave over 40 years of service and devotion to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. She served both at home and abroad, including a deeply meaningful chapter as a missionary in Taiwan from 1969 to 1975. Wilma never believed that life ended at retirement. Following her retirement in 2002, Wilma was elected Moderator of the 2006 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. She received the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Medal during her moderatorial visit to India, and she was named an honorary member of the Taiwanese Canadian Association in the same year. In 2010, she was honoured by Knox College with a Doctor of Divinity degree (*honoris causa*).

