



Korean Ministry Rooted in Christ

By Taesang Ahn, Oakridge Presbyterian Church in London, Ont.

The Korean ministry at Oakridge Presbyterian Church (OPC) in London, Ont., got started in 2003 under the volunteer leadership of the Rev. Susan Lee, with only six members. Its focus was on Friday worship and street evangelism. Over the past two decades, the ministry, with membership now up to 100, has become an integral part of OPC's multicultural vision, participating in ministries such as the Alpha program and various fundraising and missional works, while nurturing four pastors and six elders to build strong leadership within the Korean community.

Following the Rev. Lee's retirement in October 2022, the ministry faced challenges of continuity and leadership, but with the generous support of The Presbyterian Church in Canada through the New and Renewing Ministry Fund, OPC has been able to hire a full-time staff member to ensure its continued growth.

In September 2024, OPC wel-

comed the Rev. Won Hwang as the Korean ministry coordinator. The Rev. Hwang has introduced initiatives to recruit and train leaders across all age groups, provide bilingual services and implement audio translations for youth. His collaborative leadership has enhanced inclusivity and engagement within OPC's multicultural congregation. Additionally, the Rev. Hwang leads the Kids and Family Ministry, utilizing his extensive experience to connect with families.

The Korean Ministry at OPC is committed to sharing the gospel with the unchurched Korean community in London, where 80% remain unreached. The Korean ministry offers ESL classes to support immigrants, cultural integration activities such as Neighbour Day, badminton and pickleball, and celebrations of traditional Korean holidays like Chuseok and Seollal. It also provides mentorship and discipleship programs, guiding newcomers through Bible studies and practical support. Community outreach includes evangelism events, Fri-



An ESL class for the Korean community at Oakridge Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., with the Rev. Dr. Tim Archibald and teacher Anne Bigham.

day worship services and social gatherings. Additionally, the Korean ministry has hosted an annual Christmas dinner since 2012, bringing the community together for fellowship, celebration and to raise support for mission initiatives. Through these programs, the Korean ministry strives to be

a welcoming space where faith, culture and community come together to reflect God's love.

Through the continued support of the New and Renewing Ministry Fund, OPC seeks to stabilize and expand this vital ministry. This fund enables the bilingual coordinator to nurture leaders,

grow the ministry and foster evangelism efforts. OPC deeply appreciates the PCC's generous support, which has been instrumental in ensuring the Korean ministry remains a vibrant part of its vision to be "a caring, diverse community rooted in Christ growing a new generation of faith."

The **New and Renewing Ministry Fund** is offered by The Presbyterian Church in Canada to support ministry leaders and congregations as they open themselves up to discern God's vision and explore new opportunities to live out Christ's mission. To learn more about this and other available grants, visit presbyterian.ca/funds.



The Korean ministry Christmas dinner to support mission projects, with the Korean children's choir singing Arirang, a Korean folk song.



The Korean ministry food booth for Neighbour Day, part of community outreach.



A pastoral visitation for a new business opened by a Korean congregant. Pictured (left to right) are the Rev. Dr. Tim Archibald, the Rev. Won Hwang and the Rev. Susan Lee.



A gathering for Korean university students at OPC in September 2024.

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Biblical Understandings of Change

By the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Moderator of 2024 General Assembly

Depending on the circumstances of particular congregations, quite a few of us in the PCC are currently confronting the necessity of change. These changes might be an evolution of programs or outreach for a congregation, or perhaps an experiment in shared ministry with ecumenical partners. Sometimes change is more thorough-going like an amalgamation, or something more heart-wrenching like the closure of a beloved church.

Change can be exciting and expand our sense of identity as God's people, but it can also be difficult when we lose a piece of our story or when we are challenged to grow in unfamiliar ways. Resources in biblical theology can help us as Christ's followers to understand and embrace the change that congregations choose or that is given by circumstances.

By the witness of ancient Israel's scribes and the early church's storytellers, the Lord of the universe is both the source of constancy and the provoker of change. The Bible describes God as eternal and sovereign, and the stories of our ancestors attribute steadfast covenantal love and

faithfulness to God. However, these divine qualities are not the same as God resisting change or newness. Rather, God is the source of change that can be understood as growth and transformation, as renewal of identity and comfort, and as humble openness and commitment.

We see the divine embrace of transformation in Genesis 1, which portrays God as a master architect who builds change as growth into the intricacy and order of creation. Plants of all kinds bear the seeds of growth inherent in their life (Genesis 1:11–12). Both animals and humans are commanded to pursue the growth and flourishing that is part of their nature as living beings when God commands, "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:22, 28).

In the foundation narratives in Genesis 1–11, change is also provoked by the decisions of human beings, for good or ill. These stories reflect theologically on the origins and ongoing changes that develop human culture over time—the formation of human families and the expansion of the arts and skills of civilization (ch. 4–6), and the creation of a multitude of peoples and languages (ch. 10–11). Throughout these stories, God responds to the changes wrought by humans, especially when humankind em-



braces violence and corruption (Genesis 6:5–12). Here, God is the author of change. Coming to regret the decision to form humankind leads God to "uncreate" the earth through the flood (Genesis 6–8).

However, God amends these actions again, when after the flood the divine promise is made never to destroy the earth, a promise reaffirming the blessing of fruitful growth that becomes a covenant between God and every living creature (Genesis 9:1–17). These stories remind us that the relationship between God and humans includes ongoing and interactive change, where God's intentions for the flourishing of life are expressed through growth and transformation.

The prophecy of Isaiah from exile in Babylon portrays another picture of God engaging change. Those in exile experienced a terrible change when they refused to trust God's word: the loss of everything they knew—the monarchy, the temple, their way of life. But Isaiah, 40 years into the exile, declares: "Forget the former things... See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18–19). The prophet describes a wonderful vision of change: the desert made to bloom where there once was only wasteland (Isaiah 43). All that was lost and arid, both of nature and humanity, will be changed by God's compassion and power into wholeness, well-being, a restored creation.

But there's a funny twist to Isaiah's words. He specifically

tells the people not to remember the former things. Yet the *language* and *images* he uses to reinforce his message are those of the people's heritage. When he talks about God's identity, he uses the familiar titles for God—creator, redeemer, Holy One of Israel. When he talks of God's actions that change their future, he remembers the Exodus event that was the paradigm of God's saving actions.

Even as the new emerges, the people's old identity is reaffirmed and reinterpreted. God's message for people lost in exile is a radically new thing, but it is also a retelling of the old story of God's people. The restoration God promises involves change both rooted in the people's past and offering a startling new comfort and hope.

In the gospels, Jesus constantly confronts those who are self-assured about their access to God with the need to be humble before God and to change their commitments and actions in order to serve the redemption of life that God's reign generates. Jesus invites his followers to change through openness and commitment—being open to better understandings of God's ways and being willing to trust and commit to a more faithful life. In his interactions with the lawyer about loving God and loving the neighbour, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to convey this message. The lawyer must rethink his assumptions when confronted with the example that only the despised outsider proved to be a neighbour and then must "go and do likewise" (Luke

10:25–37).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly says, "You have heard that it was said... but I say to you..." (Matthew 5), as an invitation to disciples to engage God's ways anew and to commit to living them out. Jesus warns that assumptions about righteousness can lead to arrogance that places one's own ways ahead of God's ways. In his teaching and actions, he provoked changes in attitudes and renewed faithfulness by repeatedly breaking the boundaries of societal and religious expectations, welcoming sinners (Luke 15:2); touching the untouchable (Luke 8:43–48); commending unexpected followers (Mark 12:28–34); extending God's grace to foreigners (Mark 7:24–30); and including outsiders (Luke 7:1–10). His preaching and practice communicated the Good News that through his life, death and resurrection, change as humble openness to—and trust in—God leads toward redemption of life.

Change can be difficult; there is no way around that. But by the witness of the scriptures, change as authored by God is much more than disruption and sadness. Change can reflect the flourishing of creation in growth and transformation. God's message in the midst of trauma confirms the hope that change can both root identity and restore life. Change as portrayed in the Good News of Jesus Christ reminds us that humble openness to God's ways and trust in God's love can lead us to redemption of our ways and our lives. May it be so.



Issues on Aging: Elder Self-Neglect



Greg Marsh is completing his MDiv. He provides pulpit coverage at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man. Greg can be reached at gregmarsh317@gmail.com

I am blessed to work as the Holistic Care/Spiritual Care Coordinator at a personal care home (PCH) in Winnipeg, Man., where I regularly meet with and minister to our residents. A resident's average age is in the mid-eighties, the majority are women, and most residents have dementia. Each is treated with love, respect and personalized care by the staff.

Many older individuals, before ever thinking about living in a care home, experience wonderful post-retirement years characterized by having the time and financial ability to enjoy overseas travel, start a new hobby, visit distant children and grandchildren, and spend winters in warmer locations.

Declining health, limited mobility and the onset of significant memory loss can often turn these Golden Years into bleak times of struggle and hardship. Seemingly overnight. If no one is there to help, this decline can result in the elderly living amid filth (e.g., unwashed dishes and laundry piling up, homes that don't get cleaned); at times, there could be infestations of bedbugs, lice and cockroaches. In addition, there can be an absence of healthy food in the home and a lack of needed hygiene products and essential medications because regular shopping (or even shopping online) is too great a challenge.

This condition is known as Elder Self-Neglect and is characterized by an older person's inability to care for themselves due to physical and/or mental decline and limitations.

Understanding the problem

In 2021, there were over seven million Canadians over the age of 65, which represented just under

20 percent of our total population. That age is significant because many Canadians retire by then, leaving some of these retirees with limited financial resources and an awareness that they are less able to easily perform routine tasks.

As seniors further age and encounter greater challenges, they often face a similar decline of a lifelong spouse or partner—and, at times, their passing. This can lead to fewer social interactions and, in worst cases, social withdrawal and isolation. While we might feel the likely solution for this elderly person is to seek help, there are often psychological barriers that prevent this. An article on the Northwestern Medicine website (visit nm.org) entitled *Why Some Older Adults are Reluctant to Ask for Help* provides the following reasons:

- Fear of losing independence
- Desire to not be a burden
- Lack of trust or an uncertainty of who to trust
- Fear of giving up control.

For those without children, this unwillingness to seek assistance is significantly greater as their friends are often at an advanced age and, too frequently, in a similar state of mental and physical decline. Some individuals (with or without children) seek help from provincially funded home care, but often this service is insufficient or not as reliable as needed.

What we can do

The first goal for all those who wish to help is to understand the problem, not just the symptoms. In many cases, the biggest problem is how to help older people live safe and healthy lives while respecting their wish to live at home as long as possible. This desire to remain at home is particularly strong when a senior couple lives together. When one of them is experiencing a steep decline in abilities, the other often assumes the role of primary caregiver, allowing the couple to remain together independently. (Both likely realize that if the one with the greater needs is put into a senior care institution, he or she will possibly be separated from their mate for the rest of their lives.)

Similarly, if the higher-functioning partner dies first or has a severe fall or other disabling injury, it often becomes necessary to move their less-able partner into

a senior's home since no one else can care for them.

If we encounter a situation where an older person is living on their own and we don't know if they are able to truly care for themselves, it is helpful to follow these two suggestions from an online article entitled *Working with People Who Self-Neglect* (visit researchinpractice.org.uk):

a) *Monitoring* – periodically visiting an elderly person or couple to build and maintain contact and to monitor how they are doing.

b) *Identifying potential support and help* – determine which family members, neighbours or community groups or agencies are trusted and are able to come alongside the elderly adult to help, how and when needed.

If a language or cultural barrier exists between the elderly person and those wishing to help, a call can be made to a church, temple or cultural community centre that matches the elderly person's background. Someone working or attending there might be able to help or intercede.

If you are uncertain of the person's ability to live on their own, a call to a public health nurse in your community will likely result in a caring nursing professional visiting the elderly person to assess the situation and determine what is best.

What the church can do

The church should also monitor the well-being of its older members—particularly those who worship via streaming options and rarely or never worship in the sanctuary. (One problem with the YouTube streaming platform used by many churches is there is no way of knowing who is viewing the service. Streaming via a platform such as Teams or Zoom allows for a more interactive experience, where church staff can identify who each Sunday is viewing/"attending.")

Wellness visits are essential to caring for older members. If there isn't a person on staff in charge of pastoral visitations, then church members need to take turns undertaking these home visits.

Another way we can help is by providing regular respite for the spouse or other live-in family member or friend who looks after the aging individual. The gift of a morning or afternoon away from caregiving every week or two will be most welcome while



again demonstrating God's love in action.

To buy into this level of effort, it helps to see the elderly as older versions of ourselves. While abilities may decline and memories may falter, the dreams and wants of older people are similar in nature, intensity and scope to those of younger people. They desire to love and feel loved, they want to know joy, experience happiness, gain a sense of accomplishment. They want to matter to others—to be seen as important and valuable. Which one of us doesn't yearn for all of that?

Despite each of us being created in God's image, too often if feels as though society's preoccupation with the lives of young people pushes the elderly into the background—out of sight, out of consideration. It is a view and value that must be rejected by Christians and by all members of society.

Helping those suffering from Elderly Self-Abuse can result in a significant commitment of time and effort. We should prepare to be inconvenienced as we serve them and God with our labour and love. Just as we would gladly inconvenience ourselves if we had elderly parents, we must similarly love and care for those who are God's children, regardless of their age, abilities, faith and background.

CORRECTION NOTICE

On page 1 of the Winter 2024–25 edition, it incorrectly stated that Hastings Phale is the founder of the prison ministry in Malawi. Hastings serves as country director. The prison ministry was developed by the Rev. Joel Sherbino and Rammy Zuwayo. See page 36 for more background on the prison ministry in Malawi.



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The Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls

The national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada is on the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, Petun, Seneca and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit Indigenous peoples.



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Connecting Faith, Change and Housing

An interview with the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls

By Ainsley Chapman, Executive Director, Evangel Hall Mission

In November, the Rev. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Moderator of the 2024 General Assembly, visited Evangel Hall Mission (EHM) in downtown Toronto. It was a familiar homecoming, as Pat had been a member of the EHM Board of Directors in the early 2000s when they built an 84-unit apartment building that is now called home by over 110 adults and children. She continues to be an advocate for housing, and is part of a redevelopment project hoping to build housing in her home church in B.C.

During the late 1990s, the Board of Evangel Hall Mission built Portland Place, a 46-unit apartment building for people who were unhoused. What motivated the board to build again to create the Adelaide St. Residence? The EHM Board was aware of the desperate need for affordable housing—and at the time we weren't even facing the same level of crisis as we are facing now. Evangel Hall had been around for 100 years as a street mission, and we were proud of that, but we knew that we could only do so much for people without housing. Once someone has housing, then you can really start to see a difference in their life. We wanted to explore what we could do, and the presbytery was willing to hear what we had to say. There was a funding program in those years that worked with the provincial, federal and municipal governments to get housing built, and that gave us the window to secure funding. The board said, let's go for it!

The building process is long and not easy. What kept the Board motivated when things got hard?

It was seeing the clients who came to the drop-in centre every day. We were proud of what we were doing to help them, but we all knew they would do so much better if they had reliable housing. And when you looked around at the homelessness in the community, you couldn't ignore the fact that there was a lot of need for housing. These people aren't just clients, they're not just numbers or statistics, they're human beings. So, it was the stories

behind who would benefit from the housing, and the fact that we could see the need every day, that prompted us to say, "Let's keep going!"

How do you feel like you were able to reflect the values of EHM in the final product?

The housing expressed EHM's value of supporting dignity—this meant that the size of the units were big enough to really say to somebody, "You can be proud of where you live now!" We had a couple of different ideas about the type of housing we should build, but we went with slightly larger sizes because we felt it was better for the dignity of the people who would be living here.

Why should Presbyterians care about housing and homelessness right now?

Jesus says, "Tend my lambs, feed my sheep." And I think the call of the gospel is very clear that we are not Christians just for ourselves. Worship is important, fellowship is important, and spirituality is important. But if that's not married to a sense of justice and helping our neighbours, then I don't think it's a full expression of Christianity.

I think there's a risk, when churches focus on helping their community but only define community as what's *inside* the church building. Too often, a congregation doesn't know their neighbourhood. They don't really know who their neighbours are. In some cases, there will be people who are unhoused on the street, but people scurry past them, instead of saying, "That's our mission right on our front step, how can we help?" And in my understanding of the gospel and of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, we need to be thinking, "Who are we called to be, not only for ourselves, but for our neighbours?" And that biblical call has to be the motivation. If it's housing or a senior's program or an afterschool program—there are many ways to serve the neighbourhood. It doesn't have to be housing. In some cases, though, housing is exactly the right thing to do. In other cases, it would be better to do something else. But in every case, the common thread as Christians is asking how we serve our neighbours, not just ourselves.



Brock Winterton, EHM Board President; the Rev. Dr. Pat Dutcher-Walls, Moderator of the PCC; Ainsley Chapman, EHM Executive Director; and the Rev. Rebecca Jess, EHM Vice President.

What does being "stewards of our land" mean to you?

I think we need to start with a reminder of why most churches do land acknowledgements—they acknowledge that this is not "our" land. Ultimately, this is land that's part of the Creator's world. In terms of the largest biblical and theological understanding, we are just caretakers of this land, called to steward it with the values of keeping Creation healthy. And in terms of Canadian history, this land was not ours to begin with because it was inhabited and cared for by Indigenous peoples.

My home church does the land acknowledgement every week, and people ask why we do it. Our response is that we need to be reminded that we are guests on this land, and we need to tend it with the same care that it's been tended since time immemorial. The idea that it is not our land, and that its use is for the good of the people of the land, is a Christian biblical value. And it was, and continues to be, a value of the Indigenous peoples who live here. Those values need to be at the heart, I think, of what churches do with land.

Many Presbyterian churches across the country are looking at making changes to their buildings and how they use them. A lot of them are struggling to see how housing could or should be part of this. What would you say to inspire them?

I think the main thing is to look at who are your neighbours, and that requires opening your doors and meeting your neighbours. I think there are some churches that have slipped into a silo mentality. And for some of them it's understandable how that happened, but it's not a helpful attitude when you're looking at the theology of helping your neighbours. If you're in a situation where every day you walk outside and there are homeless people around your street, if

there are hungry people around your church property, if there are seniors who do not have proper care or who are underhoused, if there are families who are immigrants or refugees who are eight people in a one-bedroom apartment—then you've got a call from your neighbourhood to at least consider housing.

Does this location need housing, and could we contribute to that? That's an actual question, and not an implied rhetorical question. Housing is a huge project. You need to go into it with your eyes open and excellent advice and support—but if the neighbourhood is calling you to do this, then you need to listen to that call. And even if the land does call out for it, your church may just be too old and too tired to actually pull off a big project. But then maybe someone else needs to use this land, maybe it's about collaborating with other churches in the area, or going to the presbytery and saying, "Can you help us? We'd like our land to be used for housing to help our neighbours and maybe just a corner of a building that might be our church."

We are churches, and the congregation certainly should be motivated to help the neighbourhood, but you don't help the neighbourhood at the expense of your own connection with God and each other. Now, I do not believe in the approach that says, "Let's get ourselves right with God first and then later do mission." I think that's a false understanding. And some churches have ended up never getting to mission because our spiritual needs seem endless. So, you'll have this lovely worshipping congregation that worships itself right into a dead end because they never get outside to do mission. But you also can't go out and keep doing the mission unless you have the spiritual sustenance that worship and fellowship bring you. The other side is that when you

build mission that also helps your spirituality; it's all connected.

Are there any wrong reasons to be developing housing or things that could seem like a good idea at the first, but really take a church off track?

I don't think churches should develop housing in order to solve a budget crisis. That is not going to be effective. The type of housing project that will really make money, for example building high-end condos—I don't think we should be in the business of housing people with big salaries. That just doesn't strike me as aligned with Christian virtues. But developers will come along and say, "Look at what I can build for you, and then you'll get this much income and you'll solve the church budget crisis." However, that just allows a congregation to go on being a little enclave with a nice budget that is not connected with its neighbours. And in fact, in some cases, that kind of building contributes to the gentrification of a neighbourhood, which is harming the people that we should be helping. It might be that a blend of both affordable and market-rate housing is the right mix.

Another factor that churches struggle with is grief, and the fear that comes with change. How can we support churches who are stuck in this place of grief and fear?

The fear is real, and we need to pay attention to that. One way is to make sure the project and all the conversations about it are not just about "moving on" without recognizing the loss involved for some in the congregation. If it's only about loss, or if the loss isn't honoured, it's going to be very difficult for a certain portion of the congregation, like the person whose grandmother built the church, for example, to get on board with the project. If we decide that, for missional reasons, we should be doing housing of some kind, the accompanying question is, "How will that enhance our legacy? And what will we take from our legacy that might be incorporated into the building?" If you need to tear a church down to build the new property, what do you save from that building that might become part of the new building? And you say to your architects, "We know you're not used to doing this, but we have these stained glass windows and we want them

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Christmas Feelings in Community



By Jacqueline Cleland, Pastoral Care and Outreach Coordinator for the Oakridge Christian Ministry, a part of Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C.

During Christmas, we foster a sense of community, embracing the feelings of hope, peace, joy and love in worship. As the city bustles outside our door, we find that Christmas is a season where people are more open to receiving love, especially when it comes from a place of sincerity and a desire to meet the needs of our community. This Christmas season, we, as a part of the Oakridge Christian Ministry and the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C., worked to meet our neighbours where they were, regardless of the situation, fostering a strong sense of community.

Starting close to home, we heard the need of our community to feel the hope, peace, joy and love of God in a tactile manner that they could hold on to and be

reassured by as we navigated our first Christmas without a full-time minister. To remind ourselves and the community how deeply they are loved, we started our first annual Daily Advent Devotional! It was a glowing and warm success as it inspired Sunday school teachers, elders, members of presbytery and more to look into the lectionary readings in new depths and new ways to remind each person that they are loved, and how that can look different. As members of the congregation shared, having each day a passage that helps you focus on the feelings of Advent by people who care for you was powerful.

The first need our neighbourhood articulated to us came through the Union Gospel Mission and their hope to be able to help others. Union Gospel Mission is a charitable organization providing meals, education, shelter, safe and affordable housing, drug and alcohol recovery programs, and support services to those struggling with homelessness and ad-

diction in Canada, with locations in our community. They were doing a clothing drive for Christmas, and our community answered the call to help with Christmas hampers. We gathered over 200 pounds of clothing! We were delighted to support the hampers, and the brand-new clothing (with tags still on) went toward the hamper store to give community members the experience of having new items for Christmas. The remaining donations were used at the women's and families centre and the men's shelter. It was indeed a moment where the warmth of God's love was felt in the warmth of the clothing donated.

Warmth was also experienced by our Soup and Songs Gathering on December 8 as we invited pianist Zabrina Ng to play a musical repertoire from older hymns to newer pop releases to help us joyfully connect. The musical is one of the first things we do as we prepare for Christmas. The music tugs on our heartstrings and brings peace deep into our souls as it nourishes parts of us that remain unfed. We also explored potato soup as an outreach tool, which was a roaring success. But it helped to have bacon, sour cream and more to make it a loaded baked potato soup!

Not all moments of need in our community are related to the typical understanding of hope, peace, joy and love. We felt a call for a space to exist for those who were tired, burnt out, grieving and overwhelmed. In response, we hosted

our second annual intimate Blue Christmas Gathering. This event, which has become a beloved staple of Advent, provided a space for us to sing, pray and lament together, without judgement, for what is missing from our lives. The impact of this gathering was profound, and we were grateful for the support of CBC Radio in reaching even more members of our community.

As the Christmas season drew to a close, we focused on all the blessings we had received. Each week of hope, joy, love and peace, we wrote about how

blessings flutter into our lives. This collection of God's sightings permitted us to end with a beautiful Blessing Blizzard. This blessing blizzard was intentionally blue, recognizing that even when we feel blue, we can see God in action in our lives.

We are delighted to say that Christmas feelings in the community encompassed joy, hope, peace, love, warmth and sadness. It was indeed a time when our community felt they were invited to come as they were and felt God was there for them in that moment.





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incorporated into the building. We want some space that looks like a church in the building." That way, you help people see that some of who they are gets carried into the new project.

It's about creating an understanding of how to maintain a legacy—spiritually, theologically, but also physically. What are we saving? We have a foyer in the front hall—line it with pews with name plates on them that say, "This was donated by so-and-so

in 1901," and now your legacy is in your front hallway. It's about helping people make the transition, and then they know their grandmother's love for her church is still with them. We have people who have long, long memories and whose grandparents and great-grandparents actually did build this church, and that is not to be treated lightly. But it doesn't mean you don't move forward. It does mean you have to do a lot of listening...and then be creative.

Thinking about redeveloping your church property? We can help! The PCC is seconding some of the time of Ainsley Chapman, executive director of Evangel Hall Mission (EHM), to devote to congregations as they consider the future use of their land and buildings. For more information, contact Ainsley Chapman at achapman@presbyterian.ca.

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Montreat College Conference

God's hope in a weary world

By Jessica Foy, Life & Mission Agency, and the PCC Montreat College Conference participants

The Montreat College Conference held in North Carolina in January 2025 brought post-secondary students together through daily worship, workshops, critical conversations, recreation events and delicious meals. It was a real pleasure to accompany six young adults from across the PCC to this gathering in Christian community. The other participants from the PCC were from the Synods of Southwestern Ontario, Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda, Quebec and Eastern Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta & the Northwest, and British Columbia.

The College Conference offers a transformative experience that nurtures faith and personal growth. It's a space where young adults can engage and connect with meaningful workshops and explore profound spiritual themes in a way that resonates with their lives. The conference fosters a sense of community, allowing participants to connect with others who share their journey of faith. It's an opportunity to be inspired and healed, to see God's presence in new and unexpected ways, and to carry that hope and purpose into their everyday lives.

During the retreat, the sermons were based on the story of the woman healed by Jesus after 12 years of suffering from a hemor-



The PCC participants at Montreat: Micheline, Cassidy, Andrew, Matt, Emma, Jess, Duncan and Kevin.

rhage. The sermons focused on four different themes: hemorrhaging, hiding, hope, healing. Often, when we pray for divine healing, we expect it to be painless and instantaneous. It is easy to feel hopeless and abandoned when we can't see how God is working. True healing starts with recognizing the places where we are hemorrhaging, the struggles we conceal from others. It starts with bringing it to God, asking God for the courage and strength to press on. It requires that we come out of our hiding, following God out of darkness and despair. It's knowing that even if there is no cure or fix, healing is always possible. And when we struggle to hold on to the hope of God's promises of healing and restoration, it's knowing that if God's grace and



Worship space with musician DJ Boyd and preacher the Rev. Gail Henderson-Belsito.

mercy are true, it doesn't matter if you can't believe in it, the Triune God is still working within you and around you. It's realizing that even if healing doesn't come the way that we desire it, we can always press into God, taking the next step in faith, obedience and hope.

When hope, healing and restoration feel impossible, we need to be honest with God. And then, advocate for healing, for yourself, your family and your community. And as you pray for healing and renewal, ask God how you can be a part of answering that prayer. How can you welcome the stranger? How can you speak up for justice and truth? How can you be an instrument of hope? Building community requires time and intentionality. It requires that we support and care for one another. Community building is how we create and hold on to hope. Work-

ing together for a better future is how we heal both our collective and individual wounds.

The conference created a space for reflection and meaningful connection. It continues to challenge us to confront hard truths, find healing and discover hope in unexpected places. It was a reminder that we are never alone, even in our most hidden struggles, and that God's presence is with us in every step of our journey. God meets us even in our hiding, pain and struggles. The bleeding in our lives may not stop immediately, but Jesus is still in the healing business, and God's hope inspires us to believe in restoration, even when it feels risky. The highlight for me was the realization that hope is both a gift and a responsibility. Hearing that hope can inspire hope, and that sometimes others hold hope for us when we can't, was a power-

ful and healing moment.

Watching young people pray and spend time with one another reminded me of the power of community and the potential for this generation to lead boldly and compassionately in the years to come. These young people are the future of the church, and their willingness to listen to God's call and act in faith fills me with hope for what lies ahead. I am excited to see how God will use those who attended the gathering with respect to their families, schools, communities and beyond. May we continue to lift this generation up in prayer, trusting that the good work God has begun in them will be carried on to completion. To every young person who attended, know this: You are loved, you are seen, and God has incredible plans for your life. Hold on to them, and they will hold on to you.



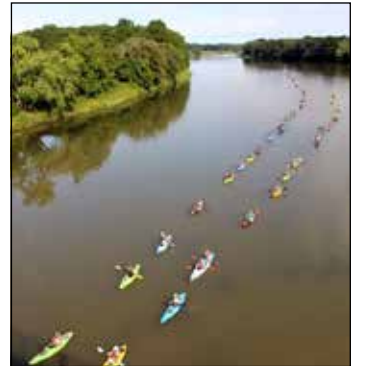
Duncan and Micheline.

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Two Row on the Grand

By Jay Bailey, event organizer and Presbyterian elder

Two Row on the Grand is a ten-day healing and reconciliation journey canoeing down the Grand River in Southern Ontario from Cambridge to Lake Erie. The event will hold its tenth annual paddle in July 2025.

Two Row on the Grand promotes healthy relationships, friendships and respect between cultures, allowing Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike a chance to grow in understanding based on trust and respect. It is a non-profit, grassroots, volunteer-driven phenomenon that won a Tourism Award for Partnerships and is led by a group of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous volunteers who

want to spread awareness of the Two Row Wampum in a positive way. The event is co-founded by Ellie Joseph, a Mohawk Turtle Clan retired teacher from Six Nations, and Jay Bailey, a retired teacher and Presbyterian elder.

Two Row on the Grand received a grant from the Healing & Reconciliation Fund of the PCC along with other grants. Several Presbyterian members, elders and ministers have participated, which has been life-changing for many. It is a cross-cultural, community-building event that fosters spiritual and practical connection.

Before launching each morning, participants take the time to thank every aspect of creation for continuing to fulfill the role assigned to them by our Creator, and ending

in thanking the Creator. With this grateful intention set, and as we help each other move through and interact with creation, we develop a closer relationship to both creation and Creator.

Jay and Ellie are often asked to give talks in churches, schools and universities. In 2024, McMaster University offered a credit course in Social Work or Indigenous Studies that required participation in Two Row on the Grand. Fifteen students from the University of Waterloo and McMaster earned that credit. For the second year in a row, 10 students from Guelph University have also taken part as a supported experiential activity.

To learn more about this event, including some of the event history, visit tworowonthegrand.com.



Two Row on the Grand received a **Healing & Reconciliation Seed Fund** grant from The Presbyterian Church in Canada for \$5,000. The H&R Seed Fund offers grants to Presbyterian groups that are committed to building relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. To learn more, visit presbyterian.ca/hr-seed-fund.

Knit4Need in Ancaster

By Edith Carlton and the Knit4Need team

We are a group of women from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ancaster, Ont., who get together once a week to knit and pray and sometimes sing hymns. Our main focus is to knit squares. Sounds simple, right? Well, we need the squares to be 9" x 9" and for the cast on to be like a chain and the sides to be "chain-like" too, because they all get sewn together to make blankets. The blankets are given to our local Salvation Army Hostel to give to the people who sleep on the streets and the ones that the hostel has to turn

away because they don't have enough beds to accommodate them.

Our church members generously donated money through a small craft sale and we are using it to buy the specific type of yarn that is used for the squares. We are extremely grateful for their help, and we are encouraging more knitters to get involved. We have also expanded our help to the Salvation Army Booth Centre by finding other resources that they are in need of.

We thank God for orchestrating all that we have done since the initial idea in August of 2024. So many details have fallen into



Pictured here from the Knit4Need group are (left to right) Isabel Simpson, Eleanor Pridmore, Cathy Bradshaw, Marianne Wilson, Esther Blackwell, Nina Clifford, Edith Carlton and Sandra Hamilton.

place that the Spirit has definitely been in charge of all that has happened to get us to this stage. We pray that God will continue to guide us (and that we pay attention). We were able to knit enough

squares to make 18 blankets and about four more blankets were given to us from various sources. We dropped them all off just before Christmas. Perfect timing! We give God all the glory.





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

It is a small outdoor market, and open only one morning a week from April to October, but the Port Colborne Farmers' Market draws residents and visitors from around the Niagara Peninsula. The Gathering Place Presbyterian Church is within a stone's throw, so it made sense to have a presence there to nurture connections with our community-at-large.

All Good Things Around Us

That's what we've done for four seasons.

A variety of books are provided, free of charge—books that aim to push the boundaries of what people expect from a Presbyterian congregation, books that visitors can take to read if the title triggers an interest and, hopefully, a subsequent conversation.

What titles? To name a few: C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, N. T. Wright's *God and the Pandemic*, and Victoria Looz' *Church of the Wild*. The Looz book helped generate a Christian reflection group with as many as 10 people. And there are copies of the New Testament always available.

Passersby, whether they take

a book or not, often stop to chat; some are professing Christians, others are with different traditions, or none.

Early on in our first year, we learned that our local food bank accepted fresh produce, so we set out a basket and encouraged shoppers to buy a bit extra to donate. The market vendors themselves started contributing at the end of each morning. Some shoppers now prefer to donate money, which we then spend with the vendors (who often add a "little extra"). This past summer, thanks to donations from individuals in our congregation, all cash donations from the public have been matched, with rather stun-

ning results.

Meagan Gallant of the Port Cares Food Bank wrote, "First, I would like to say thank you to... the contributors at the farmers' market who make these donations possible. Over the course of the Market Season, we received 5641 POUNDS of fresh produce from those contributions alone."

Church member George McKibbin is trying to work out how to keep the fresh produce flowing over the winter. He's been visiting some of the farmers' shops and getting bags of produce such as potatoes and apples at very low cost. Details are still being worked out regarding sustainability, but it has added to our total—we're

well over 6,000 pounds now!

Port Colborne, an Ontario city of 20,000, is like many communities: it has seen a massive increase in food poverty in recent years. Six years ago, feeding 60 people at the weekly community meals prepared by churches and societies in rotation would have been considered a lot; 135 is not unusual now. It is estimated that one in nine are using the food bank. The Gathering Place congregation is small, with about 25 attending a regular Sunday worship but, despite our size, we feel we are fulfilling our calling to embody the love of Christ to our neighbours—and it feels good!

Go ye and do likewise!



Cairn Family of Camps 95th Anniversary

By Rev. Karen Pozios, Cairn Camp Board Member

In 2025, the Cairn Family of Camps will be celebrating their 95th anniversary as a camping ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We are delighted and excited to be marking the faithful work of 95 years of camping ministry and we would like both to share this wonderful time with the church—and to ask for your help.

As Glen Mhor Camp, Camp Iona and Camp Dorothy Lake, all now the Cairn Family of Camps, this camping ministry has encouraged, equipped and sustained the faith lives of many in the PCC, especially those of us in the Central, North-Eastern Ontario and Bermuda Synod. We are grateful to have kept in contact with many past campers, staff and volunteers over the years; however, we

know that some of us have lost touch. If you are someone who has a connection with the Cairn Family of Camps, we would like to hear from you. We invite you to connect with us in this year of celebration. We want to catch up with you and hear how camp has impacted your lives.

As well, we are seeking camp photos for use this year during the 95th anniversary and as we look forward with hope to the upcoming 100th anniversary of camping ministry at the Cairn Family of Camps in 2030. The Presbyterian Church Archives has been very generous with their time and talent in assisting us with beginning our search there for historical camp photos and information, and for this we are very thankful.

Did you know that General Assembly was once held at Camp Glen Mhor? Also, we have beautiful photos with no names on them,

sigh, just like so many of us do. We have the 1970s fashions too! Can you help us figure out who is who and when the photos were taken? We hope that there may be more photos and perhaps other memorabilia out there that some of you might be willing and able to share with us. We would love to talk to anyone who has a camp photo or photos that they would be interested in sharing with us. We want to hear your stories, too! This is a time for remembering and celebrating. We believe that with encouragement it is also a time to begin to plan for the future of camping ministry at the Cairn Family of Camps.

Please connect with and contact us. Email the Cairn Family of Camps Alumni Committee at alumni@ilovecamp.org. Remember, if you were ever at camp as a camper or staff or volunteer then you are an alumni! You can also



The official opening of the Glen Mhor site on Lake Simcoe in Beaverton, Ont., circa 1930.



General Assembly was held at Glen Mhor Camp on Lake Simcoe, June 2–10, 1965. PHOTO CREDITS: THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ARCHIVES

send mail to: The Cairn Family of Camps, 3200 Muskoka Road 117, Baysville, Ont. P0B 1A0.

If you're interested in keeping up with what's happening at

the Cairn Family of Camps, go to ilovecamp.org to sign up for our newsletter, visit facebook.com/CairnCamps or instagram.com/cairncamps.

The Rev. Dr. Richard Topping: Research on the Holy Spirit

By Vancouver School of Theology Communications Office

The Vancouver School of Theology (VST) is thrilled to announce that President Richard Topping has received grants totalling \$30,000 to undertake research, writing and resource development on the person and work of the Holy Spirit in contemporary and Reformed theology. The project is funded by the Reid Trust and through a bequest to The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

This generous funding will enliven the church in Canada by supporting the development, curation and sharing of theological resources. Retrieving a Reformed doctrine of the Holy Spirit that embraces God's agency in the church and the world will bless the church by encouraging it to get caught up in the life of the Spirit, which is the life of God. Rather than rehearsing the story of numerical decline, this vision embraces the fact that God is not in decline, and that the risen Christ is renewing the church in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Rev. Dr. Topping's work will be curated into a deeply faithful and relevant body of material to be shared in imaginative and engaging formats, including:

1. a scholarly conference on the Holy Spirit and congregational vitality, as well as a published book composed of the conference proceedings;
2. a Master of Divinity-level course syllabus on the Holy Spirit to be taught at VST by the Professor of Studies in the Reformed

Tradition;

3. resources to extend VST's teaching excellence out of the classroom, to be freely distributed for congregations to use in their own educational settings.

As President of the Vancouver School of Theology, as well as Professor of Studies in the Reformed Tradition, the Rev. Dr. Richard Topping is uniquely positioned to carry out this research in conversation with leading academics, educators and students following their calling in the church, and congregational partners in the Reformed tradition across the country. His extensive experience as a minister, professor and seminary leader—matched with his personal passion for this work—will allow him to undertake and broadly share this research, to the benefit of the whole church.

"[Dr. Topping] cares about how theology informs and deepens the faith of individuals and congregations. He is an academic and a pastor in the life of the Christian Church," said the Rev. Dr. M. Jean Morris.

VST exercises its commitment to forming adaptive and engaged leaders. This research will enrich students' theological foundations, extend VST's teaching excellence to multiple venues, and strength-



The Rev. Dr. Richard Topping, President of the Vancouver School of Theology.

en relationships between the school and churches that hunger for life in the Holy Spirit.

The Vancouver School of Theology's core mandate is to educate and form thoughtful, engaged and generous Christian leaders for the church in the 21st century. VST is an affiliated college of the University of British Columbia, ranked in the top 100 schools globally and in the top 10 of most improved theological schools. VST is accredited by the Government of British Columbia, and in North America by ATS (Association of Theological Schools). VST welcomes students from many Christian communions, other faith traditions and Indigenous communities. Through its predecessor schools, VST has been teaching theology in Vancouver since 1893.

The PCC provided \$14,500 toward Richard Topping's grant, a large portion of which came from the **Conference Support Fund**. The purpose of the Conference Support Fund is to assist groups holding conferences in Canada related to ministries of the PCC. To learn more about the various funds from The Presbyterian Church in Canada, visit presbyterian.ca/funds.

Recording: Online Workshop on the Biblical Foundations for Narratives of Hope

An online workshop is available to view that took place on Jan. 11, hosted by the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Moderator of the 2024 General Assembly. The discussion in this webinar considers narratives of hope from the Bible that lay a foundation for our own stories of hope and possibility. View the workshop at presbyterian.ca/biblical-narratives-webinar.

Designed for clergy and lay leaders, the webinar considers how Jesus' words and actions impart hope for our congregations today. What do stories from the Gospel of John teach us about hope amid challenging times for the church? How might our listening to these stories, and to each other, engage our spiritual imagination in the service of our faithfulness and future as God's people? The workshop complements the project undertaken this year by the Assembly Council's Working Group on Narratives of Hope and Possibility. The format is designed for groups from a congregation or presbytery to run the workshop independently.



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New MDiv Curriculum for a New Era

By Dr. Christine Mitchell, Academic Dean and Professor of Hebrew Bible, and the Rev. Dr. Sarah Travis, Ewart Chair in the Practice of Ministry and Faith Formation, Knox College in Toronto, Ont.

In September 2024, Knox College in Toronto, Ont., unveiled its new Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree curriculum. We designed this curriculum to better prepare students for ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada (and other denominations) for a new era in the church.

That era is the post-Christendom Era. As our colleague the Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald has shown in his book *Leaving Christianity*, Canada is now a post-Christendom country. We must prepare ministers for effective leadership in this context, as well as help congregations address the challenges facing them.

The new Knox MDiv curriculum combines rigorous preparation in the theological disciplines with expanded requirements for field education, and weaves five themes throughout the courses and experiential learning: ministry in the post-Christendom context; ecumenism; ecology and theology; reconciliation and Indigenous-settler relations; gender and sexuality.

Through this new curriculum, graduates will be well-prepared to help congregations navigate changing contexts, both in the church and in the world. We've added courses in pastoral and spiritual care so that graduates of the program are better equipped to help individuals who are struggling with life's big questions. We've changed courses to focus on faith development in the congregational context—for example, reinforcing preaching as a



Communion at the Knox College Chapel.

site of education and formation for the members of the Body of Christ and as a key responsibility for the minister as Teaching elder.

We've also added a second year of Theological Field Education. Students will engage more deeply in ministry through structured, guided experiences. The goal is for students to engage in ministry at two different sites, gaining valuable insights into the diversity of the church today.

The new Knox MDiv curriculum

is designed so that the first half of the degree can be done entirely at a distance: it's a hybrid online and in-person degree. Courses in this first half are taken online, with extra provision for formation through an online "formation group." We've also developed a fellowship program to accompany this new curriculum, offering up to two students each year the opportunity to be awarded a fellowship for full-time MDiv study in the amount of \$84,000

over three years. PCC candidates who are not awarded a fellowship are eligible for up to 100% tuition reimbursement, depending on whether they study full- or part-time.

Knox College teaches students to "think deeply, live authentically, and lead courageously." We exist to serve the church, most importantly by preparing students to serve. Learn more about this program at knox.utoronto.ca/program/mdiv.

Assisting with Congregational Websites Pilot Project

By the Rev. John Borthwick, Director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning at Knox College and Curator of ministryforum.ca



They say that people make decisions about whether they will return to a church within 15 minutes of arriving for the first time. Visitors begin their assessment considering concerns like available parking, exterior aesthetic, if, or how, they're greeted when they open the door, and even the condition of the bathroom. Of course, there are many

other items on the assessment list in those early moments, but a decision is often formed long before someone speaks from the pulpit or a hymn is sung.

People are also assessing our congregations long before they ever make the decision to arrive on a Sunday morning. It all starts with an online search. Today,

a congregation's website is not just an afterthought—it's how people form their first impressions. Creating engaging, accessible and inspiring spaces online is crucial for reaching people where they are in this digital age.

Ministry Forum at Knox College is launching a pilot project to help congregations improve their virtual front door.

Our goal is to help create online spaces that reflect the congregation's mission and build stronger connections within the communities they serve.

As part of this pilot project, Ministry Forum will partner with a small group of congregations to provide hands-on support in the areas of website design, Google ads grants and social media support. This initiative will help congregations extend their reach, welcome more people and grow in creative ministries. We're looking for congregations that are already making an effort to connect with their communities but need some extra guidance. If your congregation's website or social media presence isn't quite doing you justice, this project could be just what you need. To apply and learn more, visit ministryforum.ca/pilot-project and leave your name, email address and church name.

Save the Date: On Sunday, June 1, Ministry Forum will hold a special session for all ministry leaders, congregational teams and those passionate about reimagining the future through our buildings, resources and actions. Learn more at ministryforum.ca/creative-ways.

Fashion Show Fundraiser in Vernon



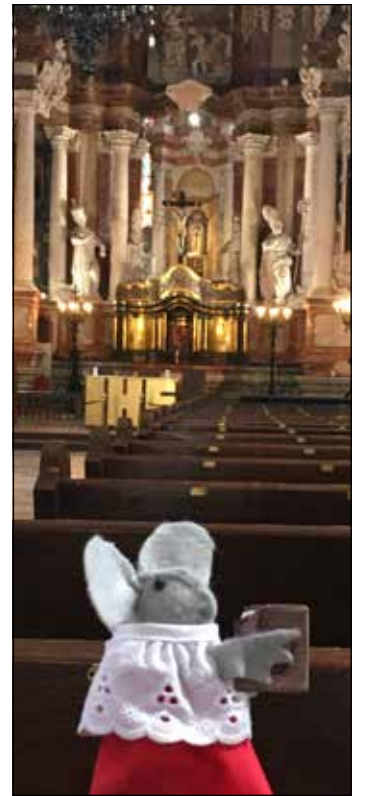
By the Rev. Teresa Charlton, Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C.

The congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C., has welcomed a large increase in facility rental groups since doors have opened post-Covid. But more renters means more wear and tear on the building. So, the narthex of Knox, a common area for all groups both sacred and secular, was showing its age. New flooring was needed, but as is often the case, money was short.

Not to be deterred, the creative minds at Knox put together a Fashion Show Fundraiser like nothing ever seen before within

the walls of Knox. Starting with the 1940s, the collection moved through the decades with style, and more than a little “tongue-in-cheek.” The final creation brought everyone’s attention to the purpose of the afternoon—a gladiator’s costume made out of leftover strips of the vinyl flooring. The afternoon ended with a Parade of Aprons, 12 custom-made gift-worthy aprons for each month of the year, which were auctioned off online in the days after the show.

In the end, proceeds from the fundraiser, a grant from the Synod of British Columbia, church savings, and donations from church members paid the bill in short order.



Charlotte the Church Mouse: Globetrotter and Influencer

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

Charlotte the Church Mouse began her adventures as part of a Christmas exchange between Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C., and Knox Presbyterian Church in St. Thomas, Ont., during the days of the pandemic. Charlotte was received at Knox Vernon as part of their Christmas parcel, designed to lighten the mood in dark days.

Over the next couple of years, Charlotte began going home with members of the Knox family during the Season of Advent, sending back pictures of the mouse and the family preparing for Christmas. Two years later, the best photos were collected and another Knox member, a retired school teacher, created a children’s Christmas story about Charlotte.

Charlotte went on to publish a second book the following year,

highlighting the many ways a church can serve the needs in the community. We thought that Charlotte’s story had come to its natural end.

How wrong we were! In late 2023, another member of Knox Vernon suggested that Charlotte begin to travel with the church family as they vacationed throughout the year, sending photos home to share. Charlotte’s passport was acquired, and her calendar quickly filled up.

Over the course of the 2024, Charlotte took part on an Alaskan Cruise and two European river cruises. She hiked through New Zealand and Poland, swam in the Baltic, went to a show in Vegas, rode an elephant in Sri Lanka, surfed in the Philippines, had tea at Buckingham Palace, went to church in Lithuania, and attended a luau in Hawaii, making many new squeaky friends along the way.

Of interest also was how quick-

ly the wider community of Vernon wanted to get in on the fun. Before long, Charlotte was requested by many not familiar with Knox. “Are you the church with the mouse?” would be their opening question.

Upon her arrival home, Charlotte collected the best photos of her adventures and has recently published her third book, “Charlotte’s World Tour,” a travelogue, suitable for young and old alike. You can view the Flipbook of Charlotte’s World Tour on the Knox website at knoxvernon.ca under the “What’s New” tab. Print copies are available by request. Please contact the Church Office at knoxpresbyterian@shaw.ca.

But stay tuned. On Charlotte’s last trip before Christmas, she arrived home from France with a handsome gentleman friend, Louis Cheddar Fieldmouse Esq. on her arm. Whispers have already started about a late winter wedding!



Faith in Action: Braeside Church on the Move

By the Rev. Janet Taylor, Braeside Presbyterian Church in St. Albert, Alta.

“For 60 years God has given us stewardship of this land. What if the time has come for that stewardship to pass to other hands?” This question, posed during a congregational meeting in early 2023, became pivotal in Braeside Presbyterian Church’s quest to seek the will of the Holy Spirit for the congregation as we explored how best to continue to be church in our community.

On Sept. 29, 1963, the first worship service of what would become Braeside Presbyterian Church was held in a school library in St. Albert, Alta. Within five years, a five-lot parcel of land had been acquired and a church built for the growing congregation.

Like most churches, the 1970s and 1980s were a fruitful time for Braeside, with a large and thriving Sunday school, both a Junior and Senior Choir, and a Vacation Bible School with attendance up to 148 children at its peak. In 1973, a larger sanctuary was built. But with church decline in the 1990s, a renter was sought, and eventu-

ally the entire basement was daycare occupied, providing much-needed operating revenues.

As far back as 2000, Braeside’s Session and Board of Managers explored options for property redevelopment with housing for seniors, but the footprint of available space made this option unworkable. A second effort was made in 2018, focusing on housing for homeless youth, but the congregation faced a backlash of protest from daycare parents and neighbours.

Following several years of expensive repairs and replacements needed by the ageing building, it became clear by 2022 that the future looked bleak. The treasurer estimated the life expectancy of the congregation to be 3–4 years at best. The time had come to start considering the viability of the congregation in the future.

Back in 2018, the Session embarked on a focused goal of opening the congregation to adaptive thinking, encouraging congregational input into all major decisions (like new paint and siding colours). Large, unproductive committees were disbanded and instead, project-specific leader-



ship was instituted. In worship, a special portion of the service became dedicated to “the questions in us all,” inviting parishioners to find their voices and build their sense of community. This fruitful practice has continued.

Visioning exercises helped articulate what was important about church—the people—and what could be sacrificed—the building. Congregational meetings became brainstorming sessions for possible solutions and alternative futures for the congregation. Every suggestion was explored and the results shared. Eventually, a congregational vote was taken to determine if selling the church was the best decision—96% voted in favour of selling, passing stewardship of the land to another within our community.

During the exploration phase, the congregation envisioned themselves in a storefront space.

The local land-use bylaws had extremely strict and limited options for “religious assembly,” and it proved a challenge to find a suitable space. Once a space was identified, a public hearing was held to determine if the neighbouring businesses would welcome the church’s presence. The representatives from Braeside were well prepared to respond to all concerns brought forward, and the church was able to finalize purchase of a 1,100 square foot strip mall storefront space.

There was only one small office developed during the renovations of the new space, and eight weeks after purchasing it, Braeside Church was able to hold its inaugural worship service in its new location on the first Sunday of Advent, 2023. On that Sunday, seven new members joined the church, including several who had been instrumental in organ-

izing the move. Although three pews were brought over from the original church, the remaining seating is easily stackable chairs, making the space multi-functional and changeable for coffee time, meetings and a weekly AA group.

Braeside Church now has an investment account, with annual interest payments that can be budgeted wherever required, and the congregation has refocused on mission. In the first year in our new location, the congregation contributed to six local non-profit agencies, provided food to at-risk teenagers every week, renewed support for Presbyterians Sharing and PWS&D, and became the first church in St. Albert to be a sponsor of the rainbow crosswalk outside City Hall. With renewed vision and vigour, over the past five years the congregation has doubled in size, and over half of the members and adherents hold volunteer positions within the church.

Braeside maintained a commitment to transparency during all stages of this journey, finding ways for all congregants to participate in the move, and celebrating with excitement the changes happening in their church. By leaving ourselves open to and trusting in the Holy Spirit, Braeside Church has ensured that we will continue to be a thriving, active part of our community for many, many years.

You can learn more about Braeside’s journey in our book, *Faith in Action: Braeside Church on the Move*, available through Amazon.

Christian Education Resources



Opening Doors to Discipleship began as an ecumenical partnership between five Reformed denominations, including the PCC, that developed a training and learning website for church leaders. In 2019, the Association of Partners in Christian Education became stewards of the website and decided to update and redesign it, recognizing that contemporary Christian Education is at its best when it includes diverse voices, collaboration and shared collective wisdom. Use ODTD to open doors to explorations of leadership, Reformed theology, educational practices, disability inclusion for ministry, becoming tomorrow’s church today, faith formation with older adults, children’s ministry, youth ministry and intergenerational ministry.

Learn more at odtd.net



Children and Worship is a co-operative ministry of the Reformed Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and the PCC. Children and Worship provides an age-appropriate way of being in worship with children ages three to nine. Each week thousands of children, who are part of hundreds of congregations in North America and around the world, use the program to experience rather than merely learn about worship. Based on Montessori principles of early childhood learning, this program continues to be one of the most effective ways of nurturing children’s faith and preparing them for worship with the whole congregation.

Learn more at presbyterian.ca/children-and-worship



Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE) is an association made up of those who are serving or have served in educational ministries as ministers, professional or volunteer educators, or students in the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Moravian Church in America. This website is a treasure trove of links to articles and resources from past APCE publications, plus Annual Event worship services, workshops, recreation events and more! Learn more at apcenet.org



Messy Church Canada is a form of church for children and adults that involves creativity, celebration and hospitality. It can be in-person, online or as take-home resources. In person, it meets at a time (and sometimes in a place) that suits the community—but not usually on Sunday mornings. It typically includes a welcome, a creative time to explore the biblical theme with activities, games and crafts, a celebration time involving story, prayer and songs, and a sit-down meal together. All parts are for (and should include) people of all ages—and should be lots of fun. It’s church for people at all stages of their faith journey. Messy Church models and promotes good ways of growing as a family: a nuclear family, an extended family, and a global and local church family. Its aim is to introduce Jesus, to give an opportunity to encounter Christ and to grow in faith. Most Messy Churches meet once a month, although a few meet more frequently or more occasionally.

Learn more at messychurch.ca

The Crossing

More than a heritage day



Indigenous Elder Mark Sault drumming.

By the Rev. Patrick Gushue, Knox Presbyterian Church Sixteen in Oakville, Ont.

What began as an idea to celebrate the 190 years of ministry for Knox Presbyterian Church Sixteen in Oakville, Ont., has transformed into an expanding mission of inclusion and reconciliation. In 2023, the idea for a community Heritage Day developed to draw attention to the history of Knox Sixteen and the vanished village

of Proudfoots Hollow. Quickly, the Town of Oakville heritage planners and the Region of Halton Heritage Services joined, and the event was planned so it coincided with Ontario Culture Days.

An invitation was extended to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, which was enthusiastically accepted, leading to the formation of “the Crossing.” Initially, this name referred to the physical place where the Sixteen Mile River could be crossed, but it soon expanded to symbolize a meeting place where people from diverse backgrounds could exchange ideas and learn from one another.

The significance of this event was underscored by the involvement of the Halton Regional Police Services’ Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Division. They highlighted that Halton is one of the fastest-growing regions in Canada, largely due to immigration. Through their lens, they understand how conflicts can arise when individuals from different cultures do not engage with one another. They recognized the



Members of the Halton Regional Police Services and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

value of an event that emphasizes respect and inclusion, and they were instrumental in ensuring participation from a wide range of community organizations.

The event provided an opportunity for participants to explore this important cultural heritage area. Activities included exploring Indigenous creation perspectives on the Moccasin Trail; learning about the importance of wampum belts; experiencing traditional children’s toys, games and crafts; hiking through the forest; and touring the cemetery and exterior of historic Knox Sixteen church.

It may seem improbable for an Indigenous nation, a police department, a municipal government and a church congregation to collaborate. Yet, this is what

happened. Through the past two years of working together, members from each community have listened to, learned from and encouraged one another. We have welcomed each other into one another’s world and have learned to trust that we can work together for the common good of all.

Then again, why should this partnership seem so improbable for people who believe in a God of compassion? Is it not the path of Truth and Reconciliation that leads us to a place where people from many different places can be respected and included?

Knox Sixteen is a Heritage designated property. The sanctuary is currently being restored and renovated as a result of a furnace issue in January 2024.



The Rev. Patrick Gushue gives the welcome.



Knox Presbyterian Church Sixteen in Oakville, Ont.

Recognizing Volunteers in Vancouver

By Jacqueline Cleland, Pastoral Care and Outreach Coordinator for the Oakridge Christian Ministry, a part of Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C.

On January 12, we at the Oakridge Christian Ministry, a part of the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C., took the time to intentionally recognize over 25 volunteers who have contributed to the life of the church in the past year. We believe volunteer appreciation is essential in recognizing the vital role that dedicated individuals play in our community. As Helen Dyer eloquently stated, “Volunteerism is the voice of the people put into action.” Each volunteer embodies this spirit, helping to shape a future that reflects our shared values and aspirations.

In a world where meaningful contributions come in all forms, the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., remind us that “[...] everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve.” Volunteerism doesn’t require advanced degrees



or specialized knowledge; it only requires “a heart full of grace” and “a soul generated by love.” This simplicity underscores the profound impact that even the smallest acts of kindness can have on others.

Within the context of our church, we feel we are called to live out our faith through service. As outlined in *Living Faith*, we work to discern the meaning of

our lives by embracing our calling to love and serve God through our care for creation and those in need. This service is not merely an obligation, but a true vocation bestowed upon us. By setting aside selfish ambitions, we discover a liberating purpose—one that is rooted in the love we extend to others.

Volunteers are the backbone of our church, tirelessly supporting

our mission to provide pastoral care, advocate for social justice, and nurture a growing community. Their unwavering commitment lays the foundation for our outreach, enabling us to serve effectively. Through their efforts, our church blossoms into a vibrant community where parishioners can feel connected and supported. As we are reminded in James 2:14–26, our faith is alive

and meaningful when expressed through our actions of service.

In celebrating our volunteers today, we honour not just their contributions, but God’s Spirit of love and dedication that drives them. Together, we can create a future we can all be proud of—one marked by compassion, understanding and unwavering support for one another. Thank you to all our volunteers!

Loving Jesus and Rejecting Christian Nationalism:

Discipleship and love of neighbour over love of power

By Allyson Carr, Justice Ministries

You might find yourself thinking more than usual about democracy, given everything in the news and our own likely Spring federal election. (Certainly I am, writing this article at a time when, even before he has taken office again, Donald Trump is talking about using “economic force” to take away the “artificially drawn line” between Canada and the United States, make Canada the “51st state,” and is currently refusing to rule out using military force to expand into Greenland and Panama for economic reasons.) The church has a responsibility to speak out against violence and to demonstrate the love and peace of Christ within the world (Living Faith, 8.5).

But we in the church should also examine where violence and injustice are drawing on Christian sources or flourishing in Christian spaces. It’s for that reason more people are talking about the movement sometimes called “Christian nationalism,” which just contributed substantially to Trump’s election win and is making further inroads in Canada and other countries around the world. The church may not be political, but Christian nationalism is.

What is Christian nationalism and why should Christians care?

Defining Christian nationalism is difficult. Many people who share Christian nationalist beliefs wouldn’t necessarily use the term to describe themselves and may be surprised to hear themselves described that way by others. One simple and frequent definition, though, is that Christian nationalism is the belief one’s nation is a “Christian nation”—that it was founded Christian and should be led or governed in a Christian way.

Christian nationalism advocates that a nation’s culture and laws should be governed by what it identifies as “Christian values,” in particular on significant social issues of the day (like gender, sexuality, parenting, health care, immigration, and the racial or ethnic makeup of a nation). But the “Christian values” it advocates for often don’t measure up to the



gospel and the demonstrated life of Christ, and often contradict gospel principles. Additionally, the Christianity that Christian nationalism promotes has little room for disagreement; one of the most frequent markers of Christian nationalist discourse is claiming that other Christians who disagree with it aren’t Christian at all—and may even be demonic (along with everyone else who disagrees with it). It operates by an intentionally polarizing “you’re either fully with us, or you’re absolutely against us” mentality.

Why is Christian nationalism a problem?

Demonizing people who disagree with you is never a good sign, but even if the Christianity that Christian nationalism promotes didn’t do that, its claim that a nation is Christian and should “stay Christian” would be problematic, especially when it pursues governance. Countries that are governed by a particular religion (or by its central tenets: the Bible for Christians) are theocracies. They tend toward oppression. Humans are fallible creatures; we make mistakes. That means the laws we make are not always going to be good, even if we think we are doing God’s will. It is too easy, in a country governed by one religion, to conflate human laws with God’s law. When that happens, quickly the stakes become very

high: dissent becomes heresy or blasphemy, and one’s eternal soul is suddenly seen as being in the balance over what are normally civic issues. Institutions, and sometimes even people like political leaders, are turned into gods. A Christian theocracy would not be immune from this.

Also, there are never people of only one faith in a country: calling a whole nation “Christian” (or any other faith for that matter) ignores and silences people of other faiths, or of no faith, within the nation. This is certainly true in both Canada and the United States, where there are many people of many different faiths and walks of life. Saying that a nation “is” a particular faith and should stay that way implies that people who don’t belong to that faith don’t really belong in that country (or if they stay, they had better convert or get used to being treated like second class citizens). That is a very harmful idea with very dangerous implications. It’s hard to imagine Jesus—at least, the Jesus described in the gospels—getting behind that idea.

In any case, Christian nationalism goes beyond narrow claims about a nation’s supposed religious origins. The Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary definition of Christian nationalism is a bit more comprehensive and worth considering: they name Christian nationalism as “a

form of political idolatry that distorts our knowledge of God and neighbor through a xenophobic, racialized and militarized gospel that is at odds with the life and teachings of Jesus.” Though that’s a mouthful of a definition, it’s worth reading through a few times. *Idolatry. Xenophobic. Racialized. Militarized.* It’s this latter definition that hits the nail more closely on the head when we look at how leaders who are drawing on Christian nationalism (whether they themselves are Christian or not) are acting. It also makes more clear why Christian nationalism is a problem even (perhaps especially) for Christians.

Loving Jesus and rejecting Christian nationalism

“If you love me, keep my commands.” This is what Jesus tells his disciples in the gospel of John. When considering what commands Jesus might mean, it would be hard to ignore the “greatest commandment”—first, to love God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind and second, to love your neighbour as yourself. Importantly, from the example Jesus gives when he speaks about those commandments, (the parable of the Good Samaritan), love is demonstrated in actions; in clothing and feeding those who need it, attending to the health of someone at risk, working for their safety, and

economically providing for one’s neighbour—even if they are nothing like you.

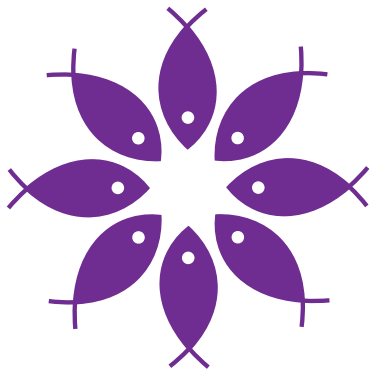
But that kind of love is exactly the kind of love that Christian nationalism lacks. Rather than focusing on unconditional love of neighbours and a commitment to pursuing well-being for all creation, it focuses on gaining political and cultural power through stoking fear and division, setting up a narrative that “non-Christians” (or “woke” people, queer people, racialized people, immigrants, refugees—whoever makes the most effective scapegoat in the moment) are “taking over” or “invading” or “replacing” the people who “really” belong here.

Christian nationalism distorts our knowledge of God by aligning itself *against the gospel call to love* in order to achieve its goals of gaining political and cultural authority in the supposed name of Christ. That is not the way of discipleship.

Jesus demonstrated in his time on earth that he was not interested in securing political power and authority. Remember, that was exactly one of the things Jesus rejected when it was offered during his temptation in the wilderness: “I will give you all the world’s kingdoms’ authority and splendour” he was offered. But Jesus not only rejected it, he responded by speaking about worshipping and serving God instead.

The ability to wield political authority and “splendour” (wealth, resources, influence, etc.) was not what Jesus was interested in. Christian nationalism has it backwards—and is not doing Christianity or the world any good. In these difficult times (as always), Christians have choices to make about who and what to support, and we will be judged by the fruit we produce. As disciples, it is not political and cultural power or authority that we should be seeking, but rather that service Jesus showed in his ministry. God loved the world and everyone in it. We should do no less.

An expanded version of this article is being developed as an educational resource on Christian nationalism. It will be available later this Spring at presbyterian.ca/peacemaking.



Presbyterians Sharing

As Presbyterians in Canada, together we

SERVE to proclaim the love of Jesus Christ through words and actions.

STUDY to discern God's guidance for today and tomorrow.

WORSHIP God and celebrate the sacraments.

Your generosity makes this possible

God does remarkable things when we put our gifts in God's hands.



Librarian at Zomba Theological University, Malawi



Annual picnic, Action Réfugiés Montréal

Many people working together

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is made up of congregations and individuals reflecting a diversity of languages and cultures that include:

64,194	32,085	10,879	5,443	1,251	770	43	8	1
professing members	adherents	children and youth	ruling elders	ministers	congregations	presbyteries	synods	General Assembly

A lot of people are very engaged in our ministry and the work of the church. We are a learning faith group. That's really encouraging to see.

– Owen Mahaffey, General Assembly Commissioner, Ottawa, ON

The University is thankful for scholarships awarded to our five female students studying with us in the Master of Theology program. Their participation has meant that we are moving towards our goal of having more women involved in leadership within the church. Without your support, none of the women would have been able to study.

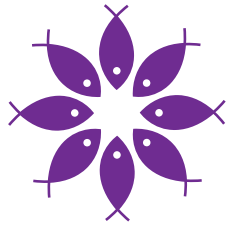
– The Rev. Dr. Takuze Chitsulo, Vice Chancellor, Zomba Theological University, Malawi

The core funding from the PCC helps ensure organizational stability and leadership.

– Ian Van Haren, Executive Director, Action Réfugiés Montréal where a grant provides hope and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, including adults and children detained at the Laval Immigration Holding Centre

Presbyterians Sharing

funding the mission and ministry of



The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Gifts to Presbyterians Sharing

- **discern the vision** and direction for the denomination
- **equip congregations** to thrive through new opportunities and challenging times
- **support presbyteries** as they launch new faith communities and renew established ones
- **provide spaces** for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to work together on healing and reconciliation and **fund projects** supporting truth, reconciliation, healing and reparation
- **accompany international partners** through grants and mission staff as they share the good news of Christ
- **address causes and consequences** of poverty, racism, oppression, conflict and violence
- **protect and restore** God's creation amid our current climate crisis
- **equip leaders** to serve the church in Canada and around the world through **theological and lay education**
- **support theological reflection** by producing study guides and facilitating discussions
- **offer long-term investment opportunities** for congregations and ministries to support ministry into the future
- **fund ministries** in Canada that serve individuals facing social barriers, including refugees, sex workers, inner-city residents, newcomers, and people dealing with addiction and mental health challenges
- **bring people together** to prayerfully seek God's direction to guide the General Assembly and all committee work
- **journey with Indigenous ministries** meeting the physical and spiritual needs of the generations of people harmed by the residential school system in which we were complicit
- **create opportunities** for people to worship together and grow as disciples



Worship service at Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church, Mistawasis First Nation, SK

- **support educational pathways** to ordained ministry for presbytery-certified Indigenous ministry candidates
- **contribute** to expenses for PCC camp directors, regional staff and regional training events
- **send young adults** to participate in programs offered by international partners
- **respond to the calls to action** from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and implement obligations regarding unmarked burial sites at former residential schools
- **facilitate National Indigenous Ministry Council gatherings** for mutual support, education and renewal and to discuss and advise the PCC on issues important to Indigenous people
- **develop tools and resources** to help all levels of our church be inclusive, as we become a healthy multi-ethnic and intercultural denomination welcoming to all people
- **create and update policies, guidelines, and resources** for the church and provide ongoing assistance in their application and use
- **share experiences** through the *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper, the presbyterian.ca website, social media and e-newsletters

and so much more!

Thank you for your continuous commitment to contributing to quality education for students preparing for ministry within the Protestant churches in Romania.

– Dr. Csaba Balogh, Vice-Rector of the Protestant Theological Institute, Romania

Daily Air Raid alerts and patrols by police officers and soldiers are frightening us. This is not our war. We want peace as soon as possible. The Church has a big role to play in these difficult times. We are grateful that we can provide hot lunches to those in need.

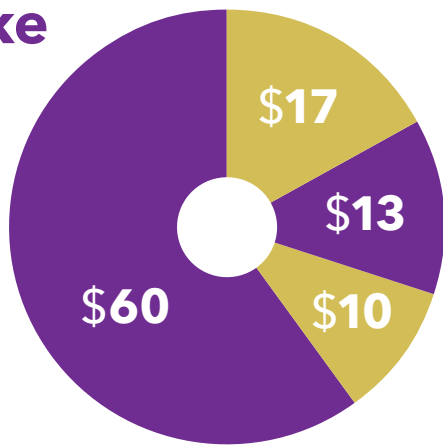
– Kristina Bado, Head of the Secretariat, Reformed Church in Transcarpathia/Ukraine where a PCC grant supports a social kitchen program for the elderly

Thank you for making a difference in the work of the Lord at Mistawasis and thank you for allowing me to do the work that I have always dreamed of doing.

– The Rev. Stewart Folster, Indigenous minister, Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church, SK

Your gifts make a difference

Out of \$100 given to Presbyterians Sharing



\$60 equips **ministries in Canada** by providing grants for congregations, camps, theological colleges and other ministries; producing educational resources; hosting webinars and events; stewarding congregational investments and supporting governance and justice work

\$17 accompanies **mission partners** in Canada and across the globe

\$13 supports ministries with **Indigenous people**

\$10 stewards gifts with strong **finance and administration**

Because of legacy, interest and designated funds, gifts to Presbyterians Sharing facilitate even more ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Staff and committees supported by Presbyterians Sharing also manage the distribution of legacy/designated funds which support congregational and denominational ministry in many ways from experimental ministry to effective outreach programs.

Maximizing the impact

Your gift is multiplied by many factors. Thousands of volunteers spend countless hours implementing and overseeing the programs that carry out the ministry supported by Presbyterians Sharing.

Even more Presbyterian ministry

The Presbyterian Church in Canada—funded by Presbyterians Sharing—also provides oversight, guidance and services to several agencies and boards that raise their own funds. Presbyterian World Service & Development, the Atlantic Mission Society and Women’s Missionary Society raise funds to support mission work around the world. Presbyterian camps, run by presbyteries and synods, and Crieff Hills Retreat Centre raise funds to supplement fees and grants. Three theological colleges—Knox College, Presbyterian College, St. Andrew’s Hall/Vancouver School of Theology—raise funds in addition to student fees and grants. The Presbyterian Church Building Corporation provides loans to congregations for new construction and capital improvements from its own funds.

Presbyterian World Service & Development



PWS&D raises funds to provide critically needed humanitarian assistance in times of conflict and disaster and breaks cycles of poverty through sustainable development strategies. As part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, PWS&D’s work complements international ministry supported by Presbyterians Sharing.



Participants at 2024 uplift: Audacious Hope

We are so grateful to God and the entire Presbyterian Church in Canada for the continual support to Prison ministry.
– The Rev. Hastings Phale, Friends of Prisons Malawi Coordinator

We have served the people’s immediate needs, which includes feeding and clothing them. We offer our time and resources to help throughout the day. We spend time by playing board games with them and making good, lasting memories. We invest our wisdom and knowledge to encourage them spiritually. These are the many ways in how we get know our community and the different ways this grant makes it possible to serve them.
– Dylon Nippi, Executive Director, Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry

When people gather from near and far in their faith and willingness to learn and teach, beautiful connections can be made.
– One of three hundred participants at 2024 uplift: Audacious Hope, a conference serving youth, young adults and their leaders

Learn at events and online webinars. Read the *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper and the PCCConnect monthly e-newsletter. Take a course at a theological college. Read international mission blogs and stories and check out the PCC's Social Action Hub at presbyterian.ca. Participate in Presbyterian Reads and Advent and Lenten book studies.

Pray for congregations, presbyteries, international partners, and ministries with children, youth and Indigenous people as we continue to love and serve one another.

Act. Add your voice to advocacy efforts. Volunteer to serve on a committee, working group or at an event. Share your experiences in our newspaper. Write letters to community leaders and governments on social issues. (See templates at presbyterian.ca/social-action). Apply for a grant at presbyterian.ca/funds. Attend General Assembly worship in person or online.

Give through your congregation, online or by mailing a cheque. Learn how gifts of securities, life insurance plans, charitable gift annuities and bequests can support ministry at presbyterian.ca/stewardship.

Give at presbyterian.ca/donate/sharing



Celebrating Palm Sunday at St. James PC, North Yarmouth, ON



Youth gathering at Newcomers Mission, Peterborough, ON

More impact

- The Narratives of Hope and Possibility working group is helping identify a narrative that will set the future vision and direction for the denomination.
- From community gardens that nourish local neighbourhoods to vibrant seniors' ministries that combat isolation, grants in over 24 different categories support mission and ministry in communities across Canada.
- Congregations participating in the New Beginnings Renewal Program are discerning God's call for their future and developing plans for moving forward.
- Collaborating with ecumenical and interfaith partners, we speak out against injustice, advocate for human rights and care for creation around the world.
- A yearly four-day, on-site Guidance Conference assesses the call to ministry of presbytery-certified candidates for ministry and helps them reflect on their gifts, growth areas and call to serve in the church.
- Together, we join faith leaders around the world writing letters to call for a just peace in Palestine and Israel.

Newcomers to Canada are now hearing about the teachings of Christ through the ministry programs and the relationship that we build with them. Our ministry has helped many newcomers settle down and start a new life.

– Rani Ibrahim, Newcomer's Mission, a grant-receiving ministry

Thank you for your generous gift to support the seminary's ministry in Lebanon and the region. Having friends and supporters like you allows us to continue with our mission.

– Dr. Martin Accad, President, Near East School of Theology where the PCC supports theological programs

By facilitating and sustaining the move to half-time ordained ministry, the congregation has predictable stable leadership, allowing us to spend time developing and implementing a vision and working with the community.

– Sharon Buchanan, Elder, St. James Presbyterian Church (North Yarmouth, ON) a grant-receiving and New Beginnings congregation

Celebrating Elders at Westminster, Ottawa

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

In October 2024, the congregation at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., acknowledged and celebrated the dedication and long-term commitment of three newly retired elders: Laura Kilgour (30 years), MaryAnn Tyler (30 years) and Bruce Thomson (44 years). Together, they have served our congregation for 104 years! They may have retired as elders, but they are still active in the church.

We accepted their resignations with sorrow and regret, but we also rejoice in the breadth and depth of their achievement to the glory of God's work. Laura Kilgour was our Clerk of Session for 23 of her 30 years, guiding and supporting our elders and the Session. She transitioned three ministers, many office administrators and two other staff members. She played a key role in the amalgamation of Erskine Presbyterian Church with Westminster

Church just over 10 years ago.

MaryAnn Tyler was our Roll Clerk for eight years and will continue to be our church Rental Coordinator. She has been active on several teams and was our church's archivist.

Bruce Thomson is in the choir and has been for over 50 years! He was on the Finance & Maintenance Team, including serving as chairperson for a time, and was the Property Manager for the church for a term. He designed and renovated the church's choir loft area and the front of the church. As well, he has been our Leading with Care lead person.

In good Presbyterian fashion, we celebrated our retiring elders at fellowship time with cake!



Giving thanks for three newly retired elders, Laura Kilgour, Bruce Thomson and MaryAnn Tyler at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont.



Kim Arnold served The Presbyterian Church in Canada for 44 years.

By Victor Kim,
General Assembly Office

After 44 years of serving The Presbyterian Church in Canada in the Archives, most recently as Archivist and Records Administrator, Kim Arnold retired at the end of 2024. The Rev. Victor Kim, Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, expressed thanks to God for the remarkable work and witness of Kim and her passion and dedication to the ministry of the Archives of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The Rev. Stephen Kendall, former Principal Clerk, shared his memories of working with Kim as a colleague for many years,

Retirement of Presbyterian Church Archivist Kim Arnold

stating that Kim has, "guided the Archives with a deep conviction and a big heart." He also noted that he and Kim "will both count the legacy of Indian Residential Schools as a turning point, and both a painful and a rich time. It was a great comfort to me that I could rely on Kim and the Archives to provide whatever documents were needed as we wound our way through difficult litigation and then the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. How wonderful that together we were able to support some Survivors the way we did with photos and stories of their childhood, knowing that sometimes those photos and documents were the only source of information for them."

Bob Anger, who worked with Kim for 21 years in the Archives, noted about Kim, "As you look back on your 44 years of service, you can be very proud of the many wonderful and impactful accomplishments that you achieved in that time: from building and growing the Archives from its humble days in the basement of Knox

College; to successfully moving the entire collection to Soho Street and then again to Wynford Drive; completing countless frustrating grant applications that in the end gave so many young archivists the opportunity to launch their careers; and perhaps most significantly all your efforts and commitment in supporting the work of healing and reconciliation and the TRC. The Archives today is such a strong and vibrant office, and the collection itself so valuable and important, because of your work and commitment."

In addition to Kim's critical involvement in the collating and sending of records to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) so that those records would be accessible and available to Indigenous families and individuals through the NCTR, over her time with the Archives, she has overseen the microfilming/digitization of much material in the national church and has continued encouraging congregations and other groups within the church to care for their records. She has

assisted in collecting many relevant records for preservation and making those records available to those interested. Kim truly leaves a legacy which will be a blessing for the denomination and all those interested in its history.

We wish Kim a happy and

healthy retirement, and thank her for the friendship, fellowship and faithfulness she has brought to the work of the Archives for so many years! We will miss you, Kim, but we are happy for you as you move into a new chapter of your life.



The Rev. Dr. T. Melville Bailey, Archivist, and Kim Arnold, Assistant Archivist, in 1981.





Giving Thanks for the Work of the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean

By Beth McCutcheon, *Life and Mission Agency Program Assistant*

At the end of March 2025, the Rev. Dr. Paul D. McLean will retire as mission staff of the PCC after many decades of faithful service.

Upon graduation from Knox College in 1982, Paul was appointed by the PCC to serve among the Hakka people in Taiwan. Paul and his wife, Mary Beth, lived in Taiwan from 1983–1995 where they raised their young family and Paul helped to translate the New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs into Hakka.



Paul with Elder Liau in February 2010.

In 1995, after they returned to Canada, Paul began doctoral studies focused on biblical languages, especially the Hebrew Scriptures and their translation to Greek in the Septuagint. Paul's hope was to return to Taiwan to continue Hakka Bible translation. This hope was realized in 2004, when Paul once again became mission staff of the PCC, this time as a full-time Bible translation consultant in partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) and the Bible Society in Taiwan (BST).

In this capacity, Paul has trained and worked for more than 20 years with teams of pastors and elders to produce accurate translations of the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament in Hakka and many of the Indigenous languages of Taiwan. The translation teams have embraced the Internet as well as ongoing developments in specialized language and Bible translation programs. For most of his years as a translation consultant, Paul has lived part of the year in Canada and part in Taiwan. During Covid, Paul worked solely



from Canada, using the Internet and screen-sharing software, and adapted his daily life to the significant time difference.

Over the years, we have celebrated with Paul and the translation teams as different portions of the Bible and entire Bible translations have been published (in print and digital formats). Paul and the present-day translation teams have initiated new first-time translation projects, while other projects have had a longer history. For example, Paul served with three teams who translated Mark's Gospel into three endangered dialects of Ngudradrekai; while translation of the whole Tayal Bible, first begun 70 years ago by PCC missionary the Rev. Clare McGill and his Tayal co-workers, was completed in 2022.

Paul wrote: "It has been one of my great joys over the past 40 years to serve with the PCC, the PCT and the BST in our shared mission of Bible translation in Taiwan. Since publication of the Hakka Bible in 2012, I have served as a BST translation consultant for 12 teams who have been

translating the Bible, in whole or in smaller portions, into these Indigenous languages and dialects: 'Amis, Bunun, Cou, Ngudradrekai (Wutai, Maolin, Tona and Wanshan dialects), Paiwan, Pinuyumayan, Sediq-Toda, Tao and Tayal. It has been an honour and privilege to work alongside and online with these dedicated and gifted translation teams, as they seek to preserve and promote the use of their endangered languages. On any given Sunday in Taiwan, in addition to Hakka, Taiwanese and Mandarin-Chinese, one can hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed in over 500 Indigenous churches by pastors and teachers using their new Indigenous Bibles. Thanks be to God!"

While Paul retires as PCC mission staff at the end of March, he intends to continue supporting translation teams in Taiwan. In his words, "Although I will 'retire' as a minister of the PCC, by the grace of God, I will continue to serve as

a BST translation consultant in the hope of completing eight current Bible translation projects. All going well, I plan to retire from my BST projects at the end of 2026 (the BST's 70th anniversary year). Over the next two years, I will continue mentoring three younger Translation Officers and help them transition smoothly to leading and supporting any ongoing projects."

We thank God for Paul's many years as mission staff of the PCC, serving with the PCT and the BST, and we pray for God's generous blessings in retirement.

For more details of Paul's work, see his blog posts at presbyterian.ca/paul-mclean. Donations toward the work of Bible translation in Taiwan are still being accepted. Visit presbyterian.ca/donate-bible-taiwan.

A Minute of Appreciation for the Rev. Dr. Paul D. McLean will be presented at the 2025 General Assembly in June.



Paul with members of the Paiwan Bible Translation Team in 2014.

Retirement of the Rev. Dr. Iona MacLean

By Valerie Macdonald, *Clerk of Session, the Presbyterian Church of Saint David in Halifax, N.S.*

The sanctuary of the Presbyterian Church of Saint David in Halifax, N.S., brought the career of the Rev. Dr. Iona MacLean full circle. It was here that she was ordained on May 31, 1977, and it was here that she went into retirement for a second (and final) time on Nov. 24, 2024—47.5 years after the momentous event as the first woman ordained in Atlantic Canada.

Following ordination, Iona left

for Ontario and her first charge. Eventually, she and her husband, Glenn, returned to serve congregations in her beloved Nova Scotia, where with the congregation of First Presbyterian in Pictou she celebrated 35 years of ordained ministry in 2012. Finally, after 23 years there, Iona retired on Sept. 27, 2015. She moved to Halifax where she had spent many years of her youth. She enjoyed the pleasures of retirement—reading, walking, swimming, travelling and music—until she answered the call in 2017 to be interim moderator of Saint David's. Little did she



The Rev. Dr. Iona MacLean cutting cake at her retirement celebration with Valerie Macdonald, Clerk of Session, and elder Davida Mackay.

know it would last almost exactly seven years.

Over the years, Iona has helped us through building renovations, leasing arrangements, changes in musical staff, the New Beginnings project, Covid, new technology,

births, deaths, restarts of programs shuttered for three years due to the pandemic, and the sale of property. Through it all Iona led us with patience, calm, thoughtfulness, dedication, resourcefulness, flexibility, insight and faith that we would find a way with God's guidance.

Iona not only served as our interim moderator but also became our part-time stated supply. She challenged us with thoughtful sermons, broadened our understanding, sang to us with her beautiful voice, rejoiced with us at baptisms, and mourned with us at funerals. She encouraged others to step up and take a lead, and we did—especially at Christmas when, for two years in a row, extended family and friends produced the nativity pageant for Christmas Eve, even providing a newborn baby Jesus nestled quietly in his siblings' arms.

Over the years of her ministry, Iona also served the broader

church through presbyteries, synods and national office, which included serving on the task force that produced the 1997 Book of Praise, as well as convener of the International Affairs Committee of the General Assembly. A graduate of Knox College, she was honoured by them with a DD (honoris causa) in 2022.

Over three days we honoured Iona and attempted to express our gratitude. We presented her with several gifts, including gift certificates, donations in her honour, a beautiful painting of the church done by long-time friend and talented local artist Mac Mackay, and a financial contribution to allow her to do some more of the travelling she enjoys. Following the service, we hosted a luncheon for the congregation and some of Iona's friends.

We wish the Rev. Dr. Iona MacLean a long, happy and healthy retirement filled with many blessings.

A Story of Hope in London, Ont.

By the Rev. Hugh Appél

I worship at Westmount Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., and like so many others, we struggled during the Covid years and attendance dropped. Also, the pulpit became vacant. What could we do with only about 30 people at weekly attendance? Would it mean we would soon be closing our doors? It sure looked that way; however, members of the congregation refused to give up.

Permission was granted to call a minister, and a minister who had asked God to give him a new challenge arrived. We also needed a director of music, so the minister's spouse took on that challenge, to the congregation's delight. The Holy Spirit is at work with great preaching and great music at our church.

Programs were changed or

restarted, including a food bank that feeds over 100 people in the community, and the weekly worship service is now more contemporary. The service takes place both in-person and online. It's never easy to help people enjoy change, but we are trying!

The congregation has begun to grow again, and now over 100 people attend. Each Sunday, an elder opens the service by welcoming people, including those watching online.

The 2023 budget was not only met, but there was a surplus. That shows us to never underestimate God's grace and presence of Jesus Christ. When we catch wind of the Spirit at work among us, when we put people and prayer together, we may be surprised what Christ will do.

Retirement of the Rev. Keith McKee

The Rev. Keith McKee retired Nov. 30, 2024, after serving 35 years in ministry. Keith was ordained on June 18, 1989, at Gale Presbyterian Church in Elmira, Ont. His first parish was the Moore Pastoral Charge in the Presbytery of Lambton–West Middlesex (then the Presbytery of Sarnia).

Keith began ministry at St. George's Presbyterian Church in London 30 years ago, faithfully serving in the east end of the city. He was the moderator of the Presbytery of Sarnia, moderator of the Presbytery of London twice, and moderator of the Synod of Southwestern Ontario. He convened the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2011 General Assembly, and he served three terms on Assembly Council. Keith is a graduate of Knox College. Along with his wife, Jan, he plans to continue to live in London in retirement.



The Rev. Keith McKee is pictured here with his wife, Jan Shepherd McKee, on his last Sunday of ministry at St. George's Presbyterian Church in London, Ont.

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KNOX COLLEGE



CONVOCATION CEREMONY

KNOX COLLEGE CHAPEL

MAY 14, 2025

2:00PM

Convocation Speaker:

Ajith Varghese, Manager, Spiritual & Religious Care
Scarborough Health Network

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BALLOT FOR THE MODERATOR

Nominees for Moderator of the 2025 General Assembly

Each year, presbyteries nominate people for the church to consider electing as Moderator of the General Assembly. For a name to appear on the ballot for Moderator, each candidate must be nominated by a minimum of two presbyteries. This year, two names will appear on the ballot to elect the Moderator of the 2025 Gen-

eral Assembly. Members of presbyteries (ministers/diaconal ministers and representative elders) vote prior to April 1 for the Moderator-elect.

On Tuesday, April 1, the Committee to Advise with the Moderator will meet and confirm the vote count before the name of the Moderator-elect is announced to the

church. The Moderator-elect's name will be presented to the General Assembly in June, and commissioners will then decide to confirm the Moderator of the 150th General Assembly.

Candidates for Moderator of the General Assembly are asked to submit their biography along with answers to a series

of questions to help the church come to know the candidates better. Below is a lightly edited and abbreviated version of each candidate's biography and their answers to only some of the questions they addressed.

Learn more about the nominees at presbyterian.ca/nominees-2025.



The Rev. Jeffrey M. Murray

The Rev. Jeffrey Murray began ministry at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sackville, N.B., following his ordination and induction on Feb. 28, 2007. He continues to minister in Sackville and raise his four children. Jeff holds a Bachelor of Humanities from the College of Humanities, Carleton University; a Master of Divinity from Knox College, University of Toronto; and a Master of Arts from the Atlantic School of Theology.

Jeff has served as moderator for the Presbytery of New Brunswick and the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces, and as clerk for the Synod of the Atlantic Province for six years. On the national level, he was on the Grants Committee of Canadian Ministries, served on the Committee on Church Doctrine, was a listener in the Atlantic region for the Rainbow Communion, a Young Adult Representative (YAR) resource person at a few General Assemblies, and he is currently serving his second term on the Assembly Council.

What are some key moments of your faith journey and how have they informed the person you are today?

At least three key periods, rather than moments, have informed my faith journey and formed who I am today. The first

period is my childhood. I was born in the farm country of southeastern Ontario and baptized in the local Presbyterian church, being brought up in the faith tradition of my parents. Home, farm life and the church of my childhood formed the foundation of who I am today. The routines of home, farm life, assisting my father in beekeeping operations, and the routines of church were often boring. Still, these were important and formative, like the repetitive practices of a musician learning scales, a performer rehearsing lines and a craftsperson repeating their skills and improving over time. While I grumbled about such life as a child, I am very nostalgic for those days now. I speculate the repetition experienced in my childhood formed an appreciation for liturgy and the repetition that comes with ministry, which, while sometimes can feel boring, can also be deeply grounding and formative, and give time for improvement.

The years spent at university and seminary mark the next key period in my faith journey. While I did learn about some biblical stories in Sunday school, my familiarity with the Bible was very limited. The Bible I was given after graduating from Sunday school was also a King James Bible with delicate pages and stiff binding. I recall being told to read the Bible as though God was speaking directly to me, and there didn't seem to be much room for questioning and doubting. The pressure of paying attention to God was exhausting, and my attempts to read the Bible were more a cure for insomnia than inspirational. Ironically, it was within a secular university during an undergraduate degree in the College of Humanities, Carleton University, that I was reading the Bible alongside Mesopotamian myths, Hindu sacred texts, and ancient Greek and Roman literature that I developed an appreciation for the remarkable way that stories revealed the human condition and the breadth of human expression. The college cultivated a love for literature, including the Bible, in which all manner of

questions and conversations were possible. This experience had a profound impact on my approach to biblical texts.

Knox College continued to deepen that appreciation for the Bible, especially for the context of preaching and its application to the realities of our time. When I started at seminary, I considered faith, spirituality, salvation, sin, morality, and even Bible reading as a more private individualistic affair reinforced communally through worship and Bible study. However, studying theology was as eye-opening as my experience with the Bible during undergraduate studies. I experienced some spiritual growing pains during my time at Knox because my faith changed significantly during those years as it challenged the faith of my youth. I began to see the distinct ways that Jesus and the gospels addressed this world's social concerns and realized that the matters of faith were more communal than individualistic. Many of my views changed during those years as I discovered that the Bible doesn't support my views as much as I had assumed or hoped. It was helpful that during my theological education and preparation for ministry in the church, I had an opportunity to work with Boarding Homes Ministry in Toronto, which helped me to understand the gospel in the context of those living on the margins.

The next key period in my faith journey that shaped the person I am today can be addressed in the next question because that formative period comes from serving the congregation of St. Andrew's, Sackville, with whom I have ministered since the time I was ordained and inducted to that charge.

What have been your most memorable experiences in serving the church, and how have those particular experiences shaped or guided your views?

The 18 years of ministering among the people of St. Andrew's have provided several memorable experiences, some of which were joyful, affirming, and supportive, and

others quite difficult and challenging. It was more the challenging and painful experiences in my ministry and personal life that provided the most memorable moments of learning and growth.

Broadly speaking, the challenges in my personal life that could not be hidden stripped away any façade of a minister having their life together. This, coupled with the grace and support of the congregation through difficult chapters and setbacks, taught me that I am allowed to be imperfectly human. I believe this deepened my relationship with the congregation, as they shared their difficult moments and imperfections with me as their pastor.

Challenges to my leadership, while feeling undermining at the time, also helped guide my understanding of leadership within the church. In the beginning, I assumed that leadership in the church was about steering the ship, providing vision and leading where I felt the congregation needed to go, but my attempts at "leadership" were often unsuccessful. The congregation helped me realize that I was one of many partners in ministry, and my task was to be a minister of Word and Sacraments and to support the Session, board and congregation in our collective discernment of the direction we might be called to go in as we face the challenges that present themselves.

Ministry with St. Andrew's has also afforded me several opportunities to serve the presbytery, synod and national church. The opportunity to work with other congregations and people through visitations, amalgamations, closures, conflicts and personnel challenges has provided tremendous insight into congregational life and leadership.

In the year you would serve as moderator, what particular focus would you bring to that role and how are you equipped for that ministry?

At this point, given that serving as moderator remains uncertain, I am also uncertain

BALLOT FOR THE MODERATOR

as to what particular focus I would bring to the role of moderator. I am humbled and honoured that the presbyteries that put my name forward as a nominee believe that I have been equipped with gifts for this ministry, which may have to do with my work serving as clerk for the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces.

Should the church call me, by way of electing me as the sole nominee to serve as moderator, I would prefer to give focus to matters that arise at General Assembly and throughout the year. In my understanding of the role of Moderator of the General Assembly, it is not to bring a particular focus or agenda but to serve the church by giving attention to the things that the church is focused on currently. I realize that that is a long way of stating TBA.

Nevertheless, as I highlighted above, the church continues to focus on the work of reconciliation, anti-racism and inclusion, which I think deserve attention. Also, I think it is important to give attention to the challenges congregations face as we learn to navigate being the church with hope amid uncertainty, which the narratives of hope and possibility aim to explore. I could see these as possible things to focus on in the role of moderator.



The Rev. Dan L. West

Prior to answering the call to ministry, Dan West spent 17 years in the petroleum industry. While his entire career was in marketing, it was split between wholesale and retail. In 1999, this all changed when, after considerable prayer and discussion with friends, family, ministers and the Session of his home congregation, he began to explore his call and made the decision to enter into theological studies. He has three children and four grandchildren.

His home church is St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Owen Sound, Ont., where he served as a member of the Board of Managers and Session. He also assisted with youth group activities.

Dan is a graduate of Knox College in Toronto. He has served as moderator for the Presbyteries of West Toronto and Grey-Bruce Maitland and has taken part in several committees. He currently serves as the Minister of Word and Sacrament at Knox Presbyterian Church in Kincardine, Ont.

What are some key moments of your faith journey and how have they informed the person you are today?

The church has been part of my life since day one, and I have never known anything different. I grew up in a home where both of my parents were actively involved in the church. I am told that we teach our children predominantly through our actions rather than our words. My parents taught me through their actions that service to God through the church was an integral part of life.

When I was about 13 years old, we lived in Windsor. A tornado came through and knocked down a wall in the local curling club. One of the men who attended our church was found under that wall. I remember our minister sitting with the youth group and trying to help us come to terms with what had happened. While I sat on the floor listening, I could only think that this is what I would like to do with my life. That may be what led me toward completing a twelve-month residency in pastoral care after finishing my studies at Knox College.

During my residency, our supervisor reminded us that as chaplains, we were currently immersed in a very dark environment where most of our day was filled with illness, despair and death. It was imperative that we search out the light in a room filled with so much darkness, or the darkness would consume us. He reminded us that if we search for the light, it will always be present. I have carried this advice with me, even though I am no longer in a chaplaincy role. I believe it is essential advice for all of us as we proceed through this journey we call life.

At the end of grade eight, they took recess away from me, and if I'm honest, I want it back. This may seem odd to you as the reader, but I consider my time at Knox College the greatest gift of recess I have ever experienced. The four years I spent at Knox allowed me the privilege of leaving most of life's responsibilities at the door and entering an environment that insisted I not only learn but grow and mature in my relationship with God and community. For that, I will always be grateful.

My dad once told me that every person who comes into your life will be a teacher. Some will teach you how to do it and others will be an example of how not to do it. I believe in experiential learning and am very grateful for all the teachers God has sent me.

What have been your most memorable experiences in serving the church and how have those particular experiences shaped or guided your views?

I have had so many memorable experiences in my career, and very few that I would want to forget. The diversity I have experienced has been a great gift to me. It ranges from part-time youth ministry, hospital chaplaincy, which then lead to contract work with the Department of National Defence in training military chaplains prior to deployment, and, of course, congregational ministry.

While being part of the Spiritual Care Team at Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto, I was not only part of an ecumenical team but a multi-faith team. As a member of that team, I was invited to every event hosted by the team. One event was extraordinarily special. We were invited by the Rabbi to attend the Seder that had been organized for the Jewish residents of the veteran's wing. As I entered the hall with another member of the team, I stopped him and said, "Pay attention to what is happening." When he questioned me, I responded by saying, this may be the only time in our lives when a Christian and a Muslim walk in together to participate in the Seder. As we went through the door, we were met by the Rabbi; he asked what we knew about the Seder. We both responded by saying our knowledge was limited, and we hoped only that we would not offend anyone. The Rabbi then went on to teach us about their tradition, that the youngest son would ask the questions because he had the least amount of knowledge and that, from a knowledge perspective, we were the youngest sons. He then invited us to sit at the head table and ask the questions. As I sat there, I reflected on how many times in history humanity has gone to war over religious ideology and would God have been pleased and preferred to see us sit at the table and share a meal together rather than the conflict that has been so much a part of our history?

I have had the privilege of sitting with hundreds of people as their time on this earth came to an end. Yes, it has been a privilege. While I sat with people, they reflected on their lives and shared those reflections with me. There has always been one common denominator. It doesn't matter their gender, political alliance, religious or cultural background, socio-economic status or any other way we might identify one another. No one spoke about how much money they made, how big their house was or whether they had a corner office. They all spoke about the relationships in their lives, the ones they felt were successful and the ones they wished they had put more effort into. I felt that I was being taught a lesson: I could either wait until the end of my life to decide if they were right, or I could apply the lessons being taught today. I have endeavoured to apply the lessons taught today and make relationships the priority in my life.

With all these experiences, the ones that seem to resonate deeply with me are the times I have spent in ministry with children and young adults.

While building an Easter diorama with children during Messy Church, a little girl asked me, "Who helped Jesus roll the

stone away?" What a great question! Another time, while driving to church on a Sunday morning, it occurred to me that I had forgotten to prepare a children's message. It was Communion Sunday, so I thought I would invite the children to come up to the communion table and have a close look at everything that was there. (I always wanted a closer look as a child.) After church that day, a little boy came up to me, tapped me on the thigh, and when I looked down, he said, "You did good today, Dan." I think it's important that we remain open to the insights of children so that, as adults, we can be reminded to approach Jesus as "little children."

While serving as Youth Minister at Thornhill Presbyterian Church, I walked into the room and before I could say a word, one of the girls said, "We have a question for you." Her question was, "Is it appropriate for a girl to ask a boy on a date?" My first thought was, didn't we deal with that in the '60s? But then I remembered that they weren't alive in the '60s, so couldn't have. I simply asked her what she would say if I told her that because of gender, she couldn't pursue certain occupations. She told me I would be wrong. I then asked them to explain to me why, because of gender, they could or could not tell someone that they wanted to spend time with them. They answered their own question with a rather lively discussion. I feel very fortunate to have been placed in a position where I can assist people in finding the answers to their questions.

In the year you would serve as Moderator, what particular focus would you bring to that role and how are you equipped for that ministry?

I believe that as people who reside in North America, we are incredibly blessed. When I think of the many privileges we possess, the advances in health care, the right to have a voice in politics, economic prosperity and most importantly, the opportunity to worship our God without fear of ridicule or persecution, I would do my very best to be an example of abundance and hope, based solely on the many blessings we receive from the God of abundance.

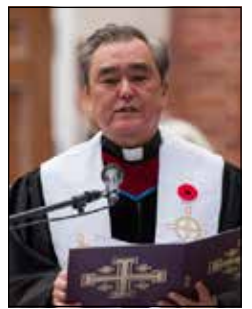
I would first and foremost remember the wise advice that was given to me by my grandmother: "You have two ears and one mouth. Spend twice as much time listening as you do talking." As moderator, I will look forward to hearing the stories of those I meet. I will do my best to ask the appropriate questions and journey with others as we search for answers to the questions. I believe that my training and experience in pastoral care give me the skills and opportunity to fulfill this role.

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On Aug. 15, 2024, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (RHPC) in Richmond Hill, Ont., welcomed 36 civilian employees and summer interns from York Regional Police, and a few police officers, as part of their training and orientation program organized by the Diversity and Inclusion Unit. RHPC was asked to give an overview of Christian faith and how the faith community in general can work together with police to promote peace and justice in York Region. David Rosevear showcased the congregation's historic Casavant organ by explaining how it works and by playing a thundering piece of music.



On Sunday, Nov. 10, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (RHPC) in Richmond Hill, Ont., participated in the Remembrance Day ceremonies at the local cenotaph, and the Rev. Robert Hayashi was invited to speak. RHPC member Don Glenn, Korean war veteran, laid a wreath with the assistance of David Mock, who also laid a wreath on behalf of the RHPC cemetery board, and Susan Falla-Johnson laid a wreath on behalf of the congregation.



The Christmas pageant at Clairlea Park Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., was very special. The congregation has a growing church school that gave each child a part in the nativity play. They give thanks to God for this answer to prayer.



On Sunday, Oct. 20, the worship service for Student and Colleges Sunday at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church welcomed three guests: the Rev. Dr. Ernest van Eck, Principal of Knox College; Dr. Angela Schmidt, Associate Professor of Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy, and Director of the Master of Psychospiritual Studies at Knox College; and student David Knox from the Master of Pastoral Studies program. These guests participated in the worship service, with the Rev. van Eck giving the sermon. Dr. Angela Schmidt also spoke to the congregation during lunch following the service. RHPC was pleased to have them visit during Knox's 180th anniversary.



Eight new members were received into the church family at Clairlea Park Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., during the communion service in November 2024. Pictured is the Rev. Dr. Kevin Livingston and the new members.



On Saturday, Nov. 23, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., held its Christmas Market, selling homemade jams, baked goods, crafts, knitted items, books and attic treasures. A traditional Christmas Spud Luncheon was also enjoyed by many members of the community and congregation. Through the efforts of so many volunteers, RHPC was able to make donations to support Evangel Hall, the Richmond Hill United Church Children's Breakfast Club and also support the RHPC general account and Capital Projects Fund. It was a very successful Christmas Market!



The Bible study group at Presbyterian Community Church in Almonte, Ont., is led by Peter Boomgaardt on Bible-based Christian beliefs. Pictured (left to right) are Karen Masson, Kathleen Lesway, Peter Boomgaardt, Ruth Berger, Marsha Guthrie, Judy Boomgaardt, Heather Smith and Beverly Blais.



In October 2024, the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sutton West, Ont., closed its doors after being a light in the community for nearly 100 years. At the presbytery service of their closing, the Rev. Bruce McAnsh, who had the honour of journeying with the congregation the last couple of years, gave the sermon. The congregation provided hot meals to those in need within the community, ran a free bread program and brought in ministry students, offering them a teaching and nurturing environment. The congregation shut their doors with a sense of sadness, yet retained a positive attitude regarding what God has next in store for them as they explore new ways to shine. As the Rev. Bruce McAnsh remarked, "I know that the members of this little band of Jesus-followers will continue to respond to the new context in which they will find themselves, just as they have always done."



Following worship on June 23, 2024, at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lakefield, Ont., a baptism and profession of faith for two brothers was held at the cottage of Shelley and Ed Kocjan on Big Cedar Lake. It included with a potluck lunch. Pictured here are Henry Bates, elder Holly Duncan, the Rev. Ann Blane and Grayson Bates.



The congregation at Thornhill Presbyterian Church in Thornhill, Ont., celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2024. A commemorative service and lunch were held in May, with the Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris serving as guest speaker. Also shown is the Rev. Dr. Heather Vais with members of the congregation.



The senior youth group at Thornhill Presbyterian Church in Thornhill, Ont., along with the Rev. Dr. Heather Vais and some parents, prepared and served the annual Christmas meal to over 170 people at Evangel Hall. In addition, the congregation presented over \$2,100 to Evangel Hall toward their continued work in downtown Toronto.



On December 15, Oakridge Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., celebrated the one-year anniversary of their new vision for ministry with the dedication of new branding images that represent their vision and ministry.



On Sunday, Nov. 10, 2024, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Coldwater, Ont., commemorated Remembrance Day, celebrated three baptisms and welcomed seven new members. Congregants are excited about the spiritual (and numerical) growth they're seeing. PHOTO CREDITS: EMILY HAWTON

It was a real treat for the congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Conn, Ont., to share their Christmas nativities with the surrounding communities. On the first weekend in December, there were 580 nativities on display, many angels, a 40-year-old Christmas card collection, and some Christmas traditions from other countries. Among the new displays was a special nativity that was loaned for the event, carved in Bethlehem from olive wood. The entire exhibit was a nice reminder that we celebrate Christmas with the birth of Christ.



Dai Bassett performed a song he had written called “We Will Remember Them” during the Remembrance Day service at Community Presbyterian Church in Almonte, Ont. Also pictured are Judy Boomgaardt and Kathleen Lesway, who are shown with 30 Christmas shoeboxes filled with goodies packed by the congregation for Operation Christmas Child.

Christmas was a joyful time at Springville Presbyterian Church in the beautiful East River Valley, part of the East River Pastoral Charge in Pictou County, N.S. Here, smiling faces gathered around a tree decorated with items of clothing for those in need. One of Santa’s special helpers just climbed down from building a tree of paper towels, too!



The monthly Baking Club gatherings at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

On Oct. 13, 2024, the congregation of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Fredericton, N.B., gathered after a special “last” service to give thanks to organist and choir director David Berry for his 28 years of music ministry. Many well-wishers were on hand to express their appreciation to David and his wife, Kathie, for their faithful service over the years. David received gifts, and several speeches were delivered in his honour. It was a happy day for David, as evidenced in the photos.



At St. David’s Presbyterian Church in Toney River, N.S., Bonnie, Suzanne and Emma admire the decorated can tree collected over December and January for the local food bank.



The third Sunday of Advent was a day of great joy for the congregation at Oakridge Presbyterian Church (OPC) in London, Ont., as they shredded/burned their largest mortgage—which began at \$1 million in 2011. Estimates of giving that totalled more than \$620,000 were received in 2024 for the Together in Faith Capital Campaign to pay off the two mortgages and renew the facility. At the end of November, another \$357,067 was raised. Pictured are the Rev. Dr. Tim Archibald, and Andrew and Joslyn Reid. PHOTO CREDIT: RUTH MCCALLUM



The congregation at Erindale Presbyterian Church in Mississauga, Ont., was thrilled to put on its first-ever Congregational Christmas Pageant! People of all ages donned costumes representing the townspeople, shepherds, kings, animals and stars that visited Mary and Joseph to celebrate the birth of Christ. As each group was referenced by the narrators, who told this special story, that group joined Mary and Joseph on the stage. Lovely, thoughtful moments and great fun were had by all! If anyone is interested in learning about how to run this simple and highly engaging celebration, please contact erindalepc@rogers.com.



On Friday, Nov. 29, North Bramalea Presbyterian Church (NBPC), in Brampton, Ont., held its annual Nativity Story and Pageant. Members of the congregation participated in the evening with Bible readings, singing Christmas carols and sharing the Christmas story.



The congregation at St. David's Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., celebrated the church's 105th anniversary on Sunday, Nov. 17, 2024. The church was built in 1919 at the North end of Hamilton and continues to provide Sunday service. Under the leadership of interim moderator the Rev. G. Beals, the Session and congregation continue to serve and welcome the community, support the food bank at Eva Rotherwell Centre, as well as provide space for the North Central Community Association, Bible study/prayer group meetings and the Jean Moodie Group, which focuses on the mission and relief involvement of the Presbyterian Church. The congregation welcomes everyone Sunday mornings and for an informal get-together after the service. Please stay for a cup of coffee or tea and fellowship!





For its third year, the Gathering Place in Port Colborne, Ont., took part in the “Share the Warmth” Advent project. Items such as warm hats, gloves, scarves—all new—were collected not only at the church but through donation boxes that were stationed with four business partners throughout the city. The strength of this project is in building relationships with businesses in the community. Partners included Allinson’s Dept. Store, the Bargain Shop, J&B Fashions and Flavor Town Indian Take-out. This year, five big black plastic sacks were filled with donations, and distributed by the social agency Port Cares.



This hat and mitten tree was a project of the Allan Pollok Auxiliary of the Atlantic Mission Society. During the month of November, the congregation at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in New Glasgow, N.S., donated hats, mittens and socks to the local food bank.



On Oct. 20, 2024, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in New Glasgow, N.S., celebrated their 205th anniversary! Pictured (left to right) are the Rev. Andrew MacDonald, guest minister, and the Rev. Dr. Joon Ki Kim, minister at St. Andrew’s.



On Friday, Dec. 6, Spirit River—North Bramalea Presbyterian Church’s very own folk band—led the evening service with scripture readings, Christmas carols and popular seasonal songs, providing joy and happiness to many who attended. Even the ghost of Elvis appeared!



The congregation of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Sherbrooke, Que., marked their 160th anniversary on Oct. 27, 2024. Established in 1864 by Irish and Scottish immigrants, the church has evolved with the community over the years, while continuing to focus on ministry and mission. Activities at St. Andrew’s include in-person and online fellowship groups, food bank collections, and participation in the wider Presbyterian Church in Canada mission work. To celebrate the anniversary, the Rev. Ross Davidson, retired (above left), was invited as guest speaker. He’s pictured with the Rev. Dr. Nigel Parker, minister at St. Andrew’s. A special meal and time for sharing stories was enjoyed after the service. PHOTO CREDIT: WILLAM CROOKS



Dec. 24, 2024, was the Rev. Noel Ramsey’s first Christmas Eve service at North Bramalea Presbyterian Church (NBPC) in Brampton, Ont. The event was well attended, with music led by Music Director Nicholas Copeland, who was joined by the NBPC Adult Choir.



On Sunday, Jan. 12, the congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., welcomed back guest preacher the Rev. Joe Gray, alongside guest musician Heather Robinson. Knox Bayfield’s organist-pianist Jean Walker accompanied the service. Heather’s guitar playing and sweet song resonated deeply throughout Sunday’s service. The congregation was so grateful for the meaningful contributions of both guests.



The congregation at St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., said farewell to its minister of 11 years, the Rev. Joan Masterton. The Rev. Masterton preached her last service on Jan. 5, 2025, which was followed by a surprise luncheon in the packed church hall. The event was attended by family, friends, community members and St. James congregants. She will be greatly missed by the congregation for her dedication and enthusiasm. Following a 30-year career with the Meteorological Society of Canada, Joan became program coordinator in Planned Giving for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. She graduated from Knox College with a Master's Degree in Divinity in 2010. Pictured here is Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt praising the Rev. Masterton for her work in the community, especially with Syrian refugee resettlement, food security and the Royal Canadian Legion. She's also shown with her grandson Aiden during her final service.



Past, Present and Future: The Presbyterian Church of St. David in Halifax, N.S., was delighted to have three of their ministers in attendance at worship on Nov. 17, 2024. The Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe represented the past (1999–2008), the Rev. Dr. Iona MacLean the present (2017–2024) and the Rev. Antonio Siracusa the future, as he was inducted on Nov. 30, 2024.



This photo is from Easter Sunday, 2024, at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lakefield, Ont., a day that involved baptism, transfer and profession of faith. Pictured here are (back row, left to right) Hazel Henderson, David Garrett, Robert Blane, and (front row) the Rev. Ann Blane, Susan Garrett, Alex Duncan, Claire Scott and Holly Duncan.



On Dec. 15, 2024, the congregation at First Presbyterian Church in Brandon, Man., welcomed new members Femi and Toyin Alatiba by profession of faith, and baptism of Tara, Deejee, Israel and Angel. The Rev. David Wilson and Kathy Lancaster are pictured with the family.



On Sunday, Jan. 5, the congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., welcomed guest preacher the Rev. Joe Gray (right) and guest soloist Peter Postill (left) to the service. Peter was accompanied by Knox Bayfield's organist-pianist Jean Walker (centre). Peter's ability to convey emotion and meaning was felt deeply throughout the service, and the congregation thanks them both for their leadership, dedication, wisdom and guidance.



The congregation at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Caintown, Ont., hosts an annual festive concert called "Caintown Country Christmas." This past year's concert, held on Nov. 23, featured the Caintown Choir and Chorus, soloists and the Flute Ensemble from sister church First Presbyterian in Brockville. The sanctuary was packed with people to start the Christmas season on a musical note! Following the concert, a reception and time of fellowship was held in the church hall. A free-will offering was taken in support of the local food bank and raised over \$800 toward helping the vulnerable and hungry in the community.

First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., continues its work to feed the hungry and marginalized in the community. As part of a regular weekly rotation, First PC, together with its ecumenical partners, organizes a Sunday Supper for those in need. Volunteers prepare and serve a hearty eat-in or take-out meal, including a main course and side dishes, dessert and beverage. There's no charge for the meal, though donations are gratefully received. First PC hosted the pre-Christmas Sunday Supper, serving a special meal of ham, potatoes, vegetables, roll, dessert and Christmas candy to over 170 people. Leftover fresh food was delivered to the local shelter. First PC is grateful to be part of this ministry to support those who are most vulnerable in the community, and thankful to work with other churches to share the Good News of God's love. Pictured above are the volunteers who help make this event happen.



The church school children at First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., were at it again, taking on the PWS&D Church School Challenge to raise money for Gifts of Change. During Coffee Hour through the month of December, the children sold a variety of handmade crafts to the congregation. Their efforts were very successful as they raised \$535, which was well over their goal of \$300! Well done by both the church school and the congregation!

As part of the fundraising efforts from the Naomi Bristow Concert at Gale Presbyterian Church in Elmira, Ont., in Nov. 2024, the congregation was happy to give a cheque of \$1,488 to the Grand River Region Cancer Centre for Kids Cancer Care!



The congregation at Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., held their annual Christmas Bazaar on Nov. 10, 2024.



The choir at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Owen Sound, Ont., performed Handel's Messiah on Dec. 22, 2024, under the direction of Matthew Allard, St. Andrew's director of music, and accompanied by Steven Warner, contemporary music director. This concert was part of the 100th anniversary celebration.



Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., was pleased to once again welcome Martha Lawrance's Bluewater Harp Ensemble on Sunday, Dec. 15, for their concert performance of "A Christmas Carol or Two." Directed by Martha Lawrance, the ensemble is composed of eight harpists, and also featured soloists Goldie Garatt, Alexa Yeo and Danuta Wyant. Free-will donations were collected. The uplifting concert lasted over an hour and the performances were sensational. The audience joined in to sing the final song, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." The congregation was so grateful to everyone who had attended, packing themselves elbow-to-elbow into the little church with a big heart. Pictured here (left to right) are Goldie Garatt; members of the Bluewater Harp Ensemble—Sharon Johnston, Joan Hutton, Jane MacQuarrie and Wendy O'Connor; Martha Lawrance; Danuta Wyant; and Alexa Yeo.



Pictures from the Christmas Pageant held at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.



In 2024, First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., kicked off its 11th year of hosting PA Day Camps for children and youth in the Brockville community. Events were held on Oct. 25 and Nov. 22. In October, the campers visited the local fire station to learn about the firefighters' work. They also collected 22.5 kg of non-perishable food items for the Brockville and Area Food Bank. In November, the campers welcomed workers from the local youth outreach organization Connect Youth and presented them with donations of socks, toques and personal care items. They also spent time creating lots of decorations for Christmas! First PC is grateful for the opportunity to reach out to children in our community, and thankful for all the volunteers and church staff who help make each camp a success!



The Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher Walls, PCC moderator, visited Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., late November. She's pictured here singing during worship, and also pictured (above, far right) with the Rev. Angela J. Cluney, Music Director Nick Jessome and the Clerk of Session Marion O'Brien. The moderator was the Rev. Cluney's Old Testament professor and faculty advisor at Knox College over 20 years ago.



Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., was happy to celebrate the birthday of long-time member Bill King on May 19, 2024. He's pictured here with one of the younger members, Neil Sowand, Clerk of Session Marion O'Brien and the Rev. Angela J. Cluney.



On Sunday, Oct. 20, guest preacher Marten Dykstra and the congregation at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., welcomed The Hometown Harpist Alexa Yeo to sing and play the harp at the 11 a.m. service. Alexa has been playing the harp for 10 years. Recently, she received the 2024 Youth Recognition Award, which is presented to an outstanding youth who is a leader and role model in the community, volunteers their time to help others, and demonstrates noteworthy teamwork and community involvement.



On Dec. 5, 2024, congregation members from Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., prepared and volunteered to serve the annual Christmas dinner at Evangel Hall Mission.



For the past 13 years, every Fall, a “Flu Shot Clinic” is held at Iona Presbyterian Church in Dartmouth, N.S., coordinated by Christine Burden-Arseneault, a registered nurse and the parish nurse. The clinic is held on a Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with booked appointments and walk-ins. In 2024, 45 people attended. Covid and pneumonia vaccines were also available. The total number of shots provided was 60. During the brief wait, Christine served juice and cookies. Information on health issues was available for participants to take home. This event is always well received, and many people look forward to it. Pictured here are Christine Burden-Arseneault, church member Kerrilee York with her two daughters, and pharmacist Andrew Redden.



Burning Bush Theatre is the name of a musical theatre group at Westmount Presbyterian Church in London, Ont. The first musical was “A Technicolour Promise,” performed in Nov. 2023. Kimberley Raeburn-Gibson, director of music, and Rachelle Goebel, director of youth ministries, ran a March Break camp in 2024 that culminated in an Easter musical, “The Tale of the Three Trees.” The following musical theatre troupe began in mid-September and resulted in the Christmas musical, “Chimes in the Night,” which took place the first Sunday of Advent. A free March Break Camp will take place in 2025.



On Nov. 5, Knox College in Toronto, Ont., held a special service to celebrate its 180th anniversary. Guest preacher the Rev. Robert Hayashi shared a commemorative message titled “Why Faith Matters.” He urged attendees to contemplate the significance of faith as exemplified by leaders of Knox College, both past and present. In recognition of All Saints’ Day, there was also a moment to honour the contributions of Knox College’s former staff and faculty who have passed away. The service concluded with a selection of musical recordings featuring the Knox Choir under the direction of the late Dr. John Derksen, former Director of Music. A special thank you to the Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks for generously donating these musical recordings.

INTERNATIONAL

Journey for Justice: Witnessing a Land of Resilience and Hope

By a PCC member who is a university student and was a participant in the Journey for Justice to Israel and Palestine in 2023

Have you ever wondered what it's like to live under the shadow of occupation, to wake up each day with uncertainty and dreams deferred? For a Palestinian, this is not a hypothetical question but a daily reality. Returning from my travels, I'm left in awe of the remarkable resilience and unwavering strength that defines the Palestinian people as they keep hope alive and carry the aspirations to one day have justice and freedom.

In July 2023, I had the incredible opportunity to embark on a journey that has not only broadened my perspective and deepened my understanding of the human rights issues Palestinians are facing, but also fostered newfound friendships, and truly opened my heart and mind to the struggles of the Palestinian people. The Journey for Justice program, a collaborative effort between The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI), allowed me and 24 other international youth to explore and experience the complexities of life in Palestine. The program aims to foster understanding, empathy and solidarity, as we explore the realities facing Palestinian youth and witness first-hand the effects of Israeli occupation in the West Bank.



Participants in the Journey for Justice exposure tour.

Our journey began as we travelled from Tel-Aviv, Israel, to Beit Sahour, a town east of Bethlehem. Our nine-day itinerary consisted of visits to Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Ramallah, where the Israeli occupation was prevalent and deeply embedded.

The Palestinian friends I made during my trip shared the mistreatment and discrimination they face daily. For instance, my Palestinian friends could not join us on our trip to Jerusalem as it is extremely difficult to enter Jerusalem with a Palestinian passport. Some have never visited as they need legal documents to cross and, even with documents, they have a high chance of being denied entry. It is extremely difficult for Palestinians to visit Jerusalem as there are Israeli checkpoints surrounding the city. I had never seen anything like this before. It was a way to prevent

and limit Palestinians from entering Jerusalem. They shared how they never stepped foot in Jerusalem and were eager and excited to see pictures and hear our experiences. We brought back some snacks and souvenirs as a way of bringing back a piece of Jerusalem to them.

In Jerusalem, we also had the privilege of visiting significant religious and historic sites that hold immense importance for people of various faiths, such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Resurrection. These sites serve as a powerful reminder of the rich, cultural and historic heritage of the region, and the need to preserve it for future generations. Walking around, we witnessed a heavy Israeli military presence, and more restrictions on Palestinian movement. I couldn't help but notice fence-like wired structures placed on top of the alleyway of markets and shops, sort of protecting the open alleyway. It was later explained that the piles of garbage found on top of these wired structures were a result of settlers throwing garbage and objects from above the Palestinian marketplace as settlements were built on top of the alleyways.

Another point made by the Palestinian youth were issues with water. Water is a basic human right. In the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel controls over 90% of water resources, where most of the water goes to the settlements inside the West Bank. It was explained to us that most Palestinian towns, cities and villages rely on water tanks where they get water delivered 2-3 days, every 4-5 weeks, while the Israeli settlements have running water 24/7. While driving by the cities and vil-



A sign acknowledging the PCC's sponsorship of olive trees planted in March 2024.

lages, I noticed blue and black coloured water tanks placed on top of buildings and homes.

The Palestinians in the West Bank are living under military occupation. Every day, Israeli soldiers invade Palestinian towns and villages, control their lives, demolish Palestinian homes, destroy their crops, confiscate Palestinian land and, when resisting the Israeli military forces, they are met with violence and aggression. Hebron, a city with a troubled history, clearly showed signs of being under occupation. In nearly every corner, there was a military post with several soldiers watching the area. But I like to think of Hebron as the city known for its beautiful glass and ceramic work. The hospitality of the people was immeasurable as they invited us into their homes, which gave us the opportunity to engage with locals all the while eating delicious traditional Palestinian food.

Visiting a Palestinian refugee camp was another notable and eye-opening part of our experience. These camps were a reminder of the ongoing Palestinian

refugee crisis due to their history of displacement. Despite all the hardships these people face, one thing was certain: their resilience. These are people who have held on to their identity and hopes for justice, even when all odds were against them.

In addition to our first-hand experiences, we were provided with professional presentations, talks and briefings from various organizations. The JAI, East Jerusalem YMCA, and YWCA of Palestine, along with international advocacy campaigns, contributed to our comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. We had the opportunity to go to an olive farm and meet with the local farmers. Through our interactions, we learned about the importance of farmland and the vital role of farmers, as well as the challenges posed by Israeli measures during olive harvest and planting seasons. During olive harvest, tensions run high, and many farmers face significant obstacles, including restricted access to their land, theft or destruction of crops, and



Wire fence over a market to block the garbage thrown down from above.

INTERNATIONAL

Friends of Prisons Ministry in Malawi

By Beth McCutcheon, Life and Mission Agency Program Assistant

Does it seem to you that the work of God in our world isn't as vivid as it once was? That it is more muted and not so easily seen? If yes, then this story, a sign of hope, might just be life-giving for you.

Can you imagine receiving formal theological education while incarcerated? In Malawi, thanks to the Friends of Prisons ministry, this and much more is a reality. Yes, this exciting and expanding ministry began in 2004, when the Rev. Joel Sherbino and his wife, Rebecca, were sent by the PCC to partner with the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP).

Joel was placed as pastor in St. Columba, a large congregation with different prayer houses. Prayer houses are smaller Sunday gatherings within close proximity of the church that Joel had a schedule to visit. He was surprised to see something that would be unusual in Canada; it included the local prison. Noticing it was not on his visitation schedule, Joel asked why.

The elders responded that they didn't think he would be interested. Looking back, Joel said, "That was significant for me. You see, prisoners in Malawi for a va-

riety of reasons feel that they are forgotten—by their government, often their families and even by God."

With no previous experience or interest in prison ministry, and having never even been inside a prison, Joel went on a Sunday morning. There he found a gathering of about 100 people who met every Sunday to worship. "You are the first minister that we've seen in years," was their response to Joel's first visit, and he responded, "I can't come every Sunday, but if there is anything else I can do, please let me know."

Two or three days later Joel was sitting at home when a prison guard came to the house with a letter written by some of the prison's inmates asking if he would consider coming and doing Bible Study with them.

A day was chosen—Tuesday—and thus began a one-and-a-half-hour weekly Bible study that would last for the remaining two years of Joel's appointment. He went every Tuesday to do Bible Study in the prison. Joel says of that time, "There are two things I would always do. Every week I would have Sunday morning worship at church and then Tuesday morning Bible study with the men at Blantyre prison. Everything else filled out from



Hastings Mwinjiro handing out soap to inmates through the Friends of Prisons ministry in Malawi.

there." In 2007, Joel returned to Canada and pretty much lost touch with the prison ministry.

PCC mission staff and volunteers continued to be active in prison ministry. The Rev. Ed Hoekstra was appointed to Malawi in 2008 and every Tuesday, along with the Synod Prison Chaplain, the Rev. Stanley Chimesya, conducted Bible Study in the Chichiri prison in Blantyre,

one of the largest prisons in Malawi. Steve McInnis and Nora Martin were sent by the PCC as volunteers to teach mathematics and English, respectively, also in the Chichiri prison. Unfortunately, the emergence of Covid cut short their time there.

Joel's time with prison ministry, however, was not over. Joel and Rebecca always had the hope of showing their two

adopted children their country of origin. In 2015, the dream was realized when the Sherbino family returned to Malawi for a year to assess possibilities for the partnership of the PCC and the CCAP. Rebecca worked with many PWS&D projects. And Joel was again placed in a church. Joel recalls, "Almost as an aside, I was asked, 'What do you think about

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The olive tree has historical significance in Palestine

Continued from page 35

occasional incidents of harassment or violence. While touring Bethlehem, we saw the apartheid wall, settlements and confiscated land. Farmers and their families are prevented from accessing their land as electric fences and



Encountering armed guards.

borders are put in place. If Palestinians try to cross these borders, they are at risk of getting beaten, shot, stoned or arrested. The Olive Tree Campaign is so important for the protection of Palestinian land, as sponsoring an olive tree allows for an international presence, giving land protection and solidarity to farmers, which helps keep hope alive. These olive trees are then planted in threatened areas. When the world is involved and when there is international pressure put in place, it makes confiscating the land more challenging.

Essentially, the olive tree is a symbol of resistance, and has historical significance in Palestinian heritage, culture and religious values.

The experiences we shared and the connections we made with Palestinian youth and activists will forever remain with me. Their stories, struggles and dreams have reminded me of the importance of standing together in solidarity for justice and peace. My journey to Israel and Palestine through the Journey for Justice program was a transformative experience that opened my eyes to the complex realities of life under occupation. It highlights the importance of international solidarity and advocacy for the rights of the Palestinian people. In the midst of conflict and oppression, I witnessed beauty and hope in the land of Palestine. It truly was a remarkable journey, and one I will never forget.



Palestinian women.

INTERNATIONAL

Continued from page 36

getting involved in the prison ministry?" Obviously, God was at work.

At that point there was a full-time designated Chaplain for prison ministry. Malawians had embraced this ministry more fully, but the ministry lacked structure. People would visit different prisons, visit once, deliver some necessities and might never return.

Not long after the Sherbinos' return, the prison Chaplain stepped away and the prison ministry was left with Joel and one volunteer named Rammy Zuwayo, who remains one of the key leaders today. Rammy was very dedicated to this ministry. He was recently retired and felt his calling in life was to minister to men and women in prisons. At that time, Joel and Rammy were involved with two prisons. Enter Hastings Phale, an elder at the church in which Joel was placed, who would accompany Joel on visits to the prisons. Then, a few months later, Lyca Mhone from another congregation felt this desire to be involved in prison ministry but didn't know how to do so. Joels says, "She heard what we were doing and joined us, and we saw this team grow in the latter part of 2015."

About three months prior to Joel's return to Canada, Rammy and Hastings wanted to know what the plan was for prison ministry after Joel's departure. You see, Joel had time, funding and a vehicle. Joel said he wasn't sure. To this, the Malawians said, "We think we should start visiting more prisons." Joel was quite reluctant to begin something he wasn't sure could be sustained, but he said that Rammy looked him in the eye with a huge smile and said, "Why don't we try and see what God is going to do?" And Joel replied, "Okay, let's step into this." So Rammy, Hast-

ings P, Lyca and Joel started visiting two more prisons, making it a total of four.

On Joel's return to Canada, this time he felt a real pull to be involved in the prison ministry but unsure what that would look like. Joel floated a proposal where he would devote 10% of his time to help develop the prison ministry and also personally raise funds. At that time all of the prison visitors were volunteers. Both International Ministries and the congregation Joel was serving in Paris, Ont., said "Yes" to the proposal.

"How do we begin to become intentional was a key question as the ministry was developing," says Joel. So it was decided that one of the most important things was the ministry of presence by being very regular in our visits. Frequency of visits was dependent upon the proximity of the prisons to where those visiting lived. That meant that some prisons were visited weekly, some bi-weekly, and some monthly. But we wanted to be consistent."

Over time, the prison volunteers had more capacity and said that they wanted to visit more prisons. Joel says, "The reality of this ministry is that the team of Malawians were like the gas, and I was the brake. I was always the one saying, 'Are we sure, or do we have the capacity? Do we have the finances?'"

Astoundingly, a new big opening for the Friends of Prisons ministry came in 2020 because of Covid. Joel remembers, "Volunteers were unable to even go into the prisons. They couldn't even get there, as public transportation was shut down. No one was allowed access into the prisons." This only propelled the dedicated team of Malawians to come up with a creative solution. Because of the lack of good Internet in Malawi, the team decided

to handwrite Bible studies and deliver them to the prisons and allow the prisoners to begin to lead the ministry. What they witnessed was amazing. During Covid, more people came to faith in Christ and the ministry really began to grow and expand. Not only that, the government came to appreciate the Friends of Prisons, for during Covid this ministry continued to provide basic supplies and necessities. Joel says, "When Covid restrictions were lessened, instead of being cautious and guarded around what the prison ministry was doing, they were asking the team why we were not in every prison in the district."

Rammy, Hastings P. and Lyca were soon joined by Hastings Mwinjiro, who had been an inmate in the Blantyre prison and had come to faith through the prison ministry. He was ready to step into leadership and when he was released asked if he could join the team.

Today, Takwonda Thompson is the newest member of the team. He is in the lake region so is able to visit prisons that the team wouldn't otherwise be able to reach in Mangochi and Dedza. Joel reflects, "Today, the prison ministry has a good system and a good structure, yet it is really the generosity of God and the incredible dedication and perseverance of the Friends of Prisons team that makes this ministry possible."

In 2020, Joel felt that if the Friends of Prisons ministry was going to grow, he needed to dedicate more time to it. Joel's initial commitment of 10% of his time was increased to 25%. Then, as the ministry continued to expand, Joel realized that for the ministry to be sustained and grow even further, the Malawian team needed to become full-time staff. It has been a year-long process but starting in 2025 the team are coming on as full-time staff of the prison ministry.

For Joel, "The people who engage in this ministry are remarkable. They travel in local public transport, sometimes for a couple of hours. It is inspiring to see their enthusiasm." Stability has grown from the team's commitment. They began as volunteers (only transportation was covered). Then they were provided with a daily per diem, then a small stipend, then a more substantial stipend. And now, in 2025, they are able to receive something more in line with other Malawians in their field with support from Presbyterians Sharing.

What lies on the horizon? The



A women's prison.

goal is to see this ministry go national and reach all 32 prisons in Malawi, including the eight prisons in the northern region that they are not presently visiting. "That might take us a bit of time, but we'll get there," Joel says confidently.

Two primary objectives from the beginning were the ministry of presence and the provision of basic necessities. Joel says, "A ministry of presence—to be there in the prisons doing Bible Study and prayer and one-on-one counselling, we found that to be so important because that brought out the humanity of people in these prisons, the humanity of people who felt that they weren't human because of how they were being treated. It was unbelievable how happy the inmates would be when we would show up at these prisons. Often, we were the only people who would come and visit them. The inmates are constantly grateful for the fact that the prison ministry team just keeps showing up." The second objective for this ministry was to provide some basic necessities like soap or medicine, purchased through generous donations to the ministry. These two objectives have remained key foci for prison ministry. Building upon this foundation, Friends of Prisons ministry developed a partnership with Theological Education by Extension in Malawi (TEEM), which provides theological education. Joel says, "We started offering theological education in one prison and are now expanding to five prisons."

Further development of the ministry will focus on reconciliation. Once inmates are released, how will they be received back into their families and into their communities? Joel comments, "In Malawi, that is a big challenge. For many of these men and women, once they are released, they are left without support. They don't even have money for transportation back to their vil-



Lyca speaking to a group.

lages. Often, the ministry pays for their transportation." Joel identifies a future goal as being able to do some teaching and training with families and communities so that the grace of the gospel may be lived out in relationships that have been broken.

The vision for the prison ministry has always come from the team of Malawians. In June, the Rev. Hastings Phale, who now serves as the country director, will come to Canada to receive the Cutting Edge of Mission Award on behalf of the Friends of Prisons team. He will share with the General Assembly his experience of this ministry and its vision for the future. Maybe God will be at work in Hastings' words to help us discern new opportunities to live out the gospel here in Canada.

"I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:36).

Thanks be to God.



Takwonda having a one-on-one with an inmate.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Together for Women's Rights



In this photo from 2010, women in India gather on International Women's Day to advocate for their rights. PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL JEFFREY/PWS&D

By Guy Smagge,
PWS&D Director

Long before the Canadian government launched their "Feminist International Assistance Policy," PWS&D was involved in supporting women's empowerment work in Central America, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The women involved in these projects often experienced domestic violence, had limited access to education and health-care services, and lacked access to credit and good paying jobs. In these contexts, PWS&D has focused on making a difference in women's lives through carefully chosen local partners.

A long-standing priority

On my first partner visit after joining PWS&D, I went to Central America and visited a women's rights organization in El Salvador called IMU (whose name translates to Women's Research, Training and Development Institute). IMU worked tirelessly with rural and urban women to ensure they knew their rights and what recourse was available to them as domestic violence survivors. The work also included providing livelihood opportunities for women to earn a living independently. This included training in trades, such as tailoring, as well as how to access credit to start small businesses.

In 2012, on their 25th anniversary, IMU's Board gave a plaque to PWS&D in recognition of its

sustained partnership in support of IMU's work on women's and children's rights in the poorest areas of El Salvador.

On my second partner visit, I travelled to India and was introduced to the community health work that had been initiated by PCC mission staff member Pauline Brown. Through community health awareness programs, this work focused on empowering women to access health services and to ensure healthy pregnancies and safe deliveries.

PWS&D worked together with the Church of North India and with financial support from the Canadian government to greatly expand on that work and reach thousands of women in over 100 villages. In most of these places, people lived far away from any government health services, so having trained community health workers reach into those villages was often both life-giving and lifesaving.

On that same visit to India, I met partners in the southern state of Tamil Nadu who were helping women of various faiths (Hindu, Muslim, Christian and others) set up "self-help groups." These groups gathered on a weekly basis to save money, gain literacy skills (including financial literacy), and learn together how to stand up for their rights.

Over the years, I witnessed how these women, on March 8, would gather by the thousands to march and ask authorities to act on regulations that already existed to protect women. They

also asked for the closure of illicit alcohol shops, to improve streetlights in their communities and to crack down on the domestic violence that was affecting them. I saw how those women borrowed from their group bank accounts to invest in small businesses and become able to pay for their basic needs and those of their children. That is what we call women's empowerment, and it made me proud to be supporting these amazing local partners.

Since then, PWS&D has expanded its work to support girls' education in both Pakistan and Afghanistan (until the Taliban came to power), women's health and rights in other marginalized states of India (Bihar, Jarkhand) and in Nepal. We are now supporting women's empowerment work with Indigenous women in Guatemala, who are gaining new opportunities for agricultural and livestock production with the support of Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

PWS&D's focus on maternal and child health continues as well, including in Malawi where our church-based partners reach into rural areas. The focus of this work includes raising the awareness of young people to the dangers of early pregnancy, and prevention of child marriages.

On International Women's Day, March 8, we are mindful that the protection of women's rights remains an ongoing global challenge, and that progress made over decades can be undone very quickly, as we have



PWS&D has a long history of support for women's and children's health and rights in places like Malawi. PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL JEFFREY/PWS&D

witnessed in Afghanistan.

Jesus was a defender of women's rights, and he promoted respect for women as equals in marriage and otherwise. He stood up for women when they were abused. Inspired by this, PWS&D works together with partners and coalitions to promote respect for women's rights. We recently updated our gender justice policy, with the goal of affirming PWS&D's commitment to gender equality as an organizational goal, as well as an essential element in the pursuit of PWS&D's values of compassion, justice and partnership.

Global ecumenical collaboration

The ACT Alliance, the largest coalition of Protestant and Orthodox

churches and church-related organizations engaged in humanitarian, development and advocacy work in the world, issued a public statement on our collective action on gender justice. One of the recommendations in that statement asks that UN member states "create enabling environments for women and girls to be economically empowered and access their economic rights, including reforming unequal family laws."

These collective efforts need to continue for women to fulfill their full potential with dignity and equality. As Christians, and through PWS&D, we are called to promote gender equality and to act on the trespassing of women's rights wherever they take place.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Food Assistance Provides a Lifeline in Afghanistan

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

Food insecurity in Afghanistan remains alarmingly high, having risen consistently since the Taliban took control of the country again in August 2021. Winter months only exacerbate the situation.

The climate crisis increases challenges for communities across the country. Erratic weather conditions have become the norm. Heavy rains leading to flash floods, followed by drought-like conditions, make any sort of agricultural planning tremendously difficult.

In addition, many of the tens of thousands of families who were forced to return to Afghanistan

from Pakistan came back with nothing, some having never lived in the country, and with few opportunities existing to make a living and feed their children.

PWS&D, working with our local partner (not named for security reasons) and with funding from Canadian Foodgrains Bank, is implementing a second phase of food assistance between December 2024 and April 2025. Over the five months of the project, 1,870 households will receive monthly cash assistance to buy food and to help meet essential needs.

Marjan is a 52-year-old widow who lives in Bamyán province. She has been the sole provider for the family since her husband's death in 2022. Her eldest daughter



Marjan and her family in front of their home. The mother of four is the sole provider for the family.

was able to attend school until grade eight but was then forced to stop her education due to restrictions on girls' schooling in the country. Her other daughter and two sons are still in primary school. Despite how challenging it is to afford, Marjan remains incredibly committed to her children's education.

Marjan's husband, Ahmad Jan, died from complications due to COVID-19, and the inability of the family to afford medical care. Compounding these difficulties, Marjan suffers from rheumatism, which not only causes her severe joint pain but makes it difficult for her to practice her livelihood—rug weaving. While she was once able to earn a modest income, the absence of a market in the conflict-affected country and her de-

clining health, mean things have almost dried up.

"Sometimes, I simply wish for food to be available at home... my children long for something to eat," she said. "Most days, we only have bread for our meals, once or twice a day, and often skip dinner. It's rare for us to have dishes like rice, beans or potatoes. I once owned a small plot of rain-fed land, where I cultivated wheat and potatoes. However, the prolonged drought in the area, one of the regions most severely impacted by recent droughts, has left us unable to harvest anything from it."

With the monthly cash assistance, Marjan can finally afford essential food items. The whole family feels the relief of not living with the worry of when their

next meal will come. Marjan plans to continue carpet weaving for stability. She has also set aside some flour and beans for the coming months, when the food assistance is no longer available.

"You may not realize just how much this support has meant to us," Marjan shared. "As a single woman with no income, it has been a lifeline. Each month, we have had a diverse and ample supply of food on our table. It's the first time since my husband's passing that my children have had enough to eat."

PWS&D is grateful for the support received from numerous other denominations at Canadian Foodgrains Bank and for funding support from Global Affairs Canada that made the scale of this project possible.



Cash assistance allows families to buy necessary food items to sustain themselves. Here, a woman uses her thumbprint to indicate she has received the aid.

Faith Through Challenging Times

By Emma Goldstein,
PWS&D Communications

For over half a decade, Rosario has been uplifted by the support of her peers and the team at *Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Mayas*, an organization run by Indigenous women from Mam, Quiché and Kakchiquel communities in Guatemala. Formed over 30 years ago, this PWS&D partner helps women build their spiritual, economic and social capacity, with programs focused on promoting self-esteem and leadership, in addition to livelihoods capacity building.

Rosario was forced to rebuild her life after she and her child were mistreated and abandoned by her first husband. After creating a family with her second husband, he emigrated to the United States. He quickly broke his promise to provide for her and their children, abandoning them as well. In debt for the cost of

sending him overseas, Rosario was in an even worse position, and she ended up losing part of her land to cover the debt.

Given their financial struggles, ensuring the family had enough food to eat had become a daily challenge.

Rosario improved her financial situation after participating in a savings group supported by *Fraternidad*. Through this initiative, she received training and funds for income-generating projects such as agriculture (growing corn, beans, vegetables and fruit trees), animal husbandry (raising chickens, pigs and sheep) and weaving. Now, her livelihood opportunities are increasing as she sells the produce from her farm and the traditional garments she makes.

Another element of *Fraternidad's* holistic programming that Rosario regularly participates in is Bible study. For Rosario and



Rosario learned how to weave through a program at PWS&D's partner in Guatemala.

others in her community, these sessions are especially helpful because they make the Bible accessible by presenting it in their Indigenous languages. The PCC, through International Ministries, supports *Fraternidad's* ministry in providing pastoral training to women.

Rosario's Christian faith, which she has practiced for over three decades, has helped her perse-

vere, especially when she felt abandoned by so many around her. The support she receives through *Fraternidad*, as an outpouring of Christ's love, has also been constant.

In John 16:33, Jesus instructs his followers: "take courage." The work we do together as a church through PWS&D is an outpouring of the love of Christ, that helps people in a hurting world.



In her farm plot, Rosario practices what she has learned about agriculture.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Refugee Sponsorship Update

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

Every year, Presbyterians from across the country come together through their congregations, presbyteries or community groups to contribute to the church's refugee sponsorship efforts.

Over the course of the year, with support from PWS&D refugee program staff, they complete sponsorship applications, prepare to receive those they have sponsored, await arrivals, and assist with the first year of resettlement in Canada. In 2024, this

support helped bring 83 people to Canada.

Recent announcements from the Government of Canada raised questions for people involved in refugee sponsorship. On Nov. 29, 2024, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced a pause on the intake of sponsorship applications from groups of five and community sponsors. This does not affect the sponsorship agreement the PCC has with the government to sponsor refugees, and does not pause the acceptance of applications supported by PWS&D.



Members of the St. Andrew's refugee committee from Owen Sound, Ont., eagerly wait for the family they have sponsored to arrive.

However, IRCC, in its Global Cap announcement, disclosed that there will be reduced allocations for Sponsorship Agreement Holder organizations, like the PCC. This 20% reduction may affect the number of spon-

sorship spots allocated to the PCC each year. In 2025, the PCC has applied for 82 spots, which is the same number allocated to the PCC in 2024. Given the announced reduction, there is uncertainty that the PCC will re-

ceive the requested number of spaces.

If you are interested in learning more about how your congregation can get involved in refugee sponsorship, visit [WeRespond.ca/get-involved/refugee-sponsorship](https://www.werespond.ca/get-involved/refugee-sponsorship).

Hope and Education in Pakistan

With contributions from PWS&D's partner in Pakistan and PWS&D Communications

Pakistan ranks as one of the worst countries in the world in terms of educational outcomes. Patriarchal norms prevent women and girls from accessing education and economic opportunities. Currently, 12 million girls are out of school in Pakistan, and only 13% of those in school advance beyond grade eight.

In 2024, PWS&D began supporting a project in Pakistan to enhance girls' access to education. Girls' school enrolment and retention is incentivized by providing nutritious meals, in an area of the country where food inse-

curity can be severe. Additionally, communities and local leaders are educated on the importance of girls' education.

Sapna is 12 years old. She and her younger sister Raksha, who is 10, are part of a story that is reshaping their village's future. In their quiet village of Ratnoor, where opportunities for girls once seemed distant, a remarkable transformation has taken place.

Not long ago, the girls' school in Ratnoor was closed, leaving many girls without a chance to learn. Dreams seemed like fragile whispers, stifled by circumstances beyond their control. But everything changed when PWS&D's partner (name withheld for secu-

rity reasons) stepped in and reopened the girls' school. From the moment the doors opened, a new chapter began—for every girl in the village.

Now, every morning, Raksha and Sapna eagerly head to school with bright smiles and hearts full of hope. The school has become more than a place of learning—it is where their dreams are nurtured, their health is cared for, and their spirits are lifted. One of the things they love most is the delicious meals they receive every day. Through a school feeding program, the girls eat a variety of nutritious meals that have made them healthier and more energetic. Their favourite is biryani, served once a week, which they eagerly look forward to. It's not just food—it's a moment of joy that brings all of the students together and makes studying even more enjoyable.

Because of these meals, more girls in the village are coming to school. Enrolment has risen and the excitement to learn is growing every day. The school has become a hub of activity and aspirations. Sapna and Raksha's favourite subject is English, and they both love practicing new words and sentences. Raksha dreams of becoming a doctor to help those in need, and Sapna



Girls receive nutritious meals at their school in Pakistan, as part of an effort to ensure their enrolment and attendance.

hopes to become a teacher to inspire others the way she is inspired by her teachers.

But this transformation isn't just about the meals or the lessons. It's about the community coming together. Parents, teachers, and even villagers without school-going children, have taken ownership of this initiative. They contribute ideas, help with meal preparation, and ensure the school remains a safe and welcoming place for all. The meals, prepared with local ingredients and care, reflect this community spirit. Everyone feels a part of this journey, which is why the school is thriving.

The village of Ratnoor has

changed because of this project. Girls who once stayed home, unsure of their futures, now walk to school with purpose. The laughter, learning and shared meals have not only improved their health and education but have also brought the community closer.

Raksha and Sapna are grateful for this opportunity. They know that their dreams of becoming a doctor and a teacher would remain only dreams if not for the project and the support of their village. This school, these meals and the community support have given them hope for a brighter future. Anything is possible when a community comes together for its children.



Students like Sapna and her sister Raksha see more hopeful futures because they're able to attend school.

Biblical Narratives of Hope and Possibility

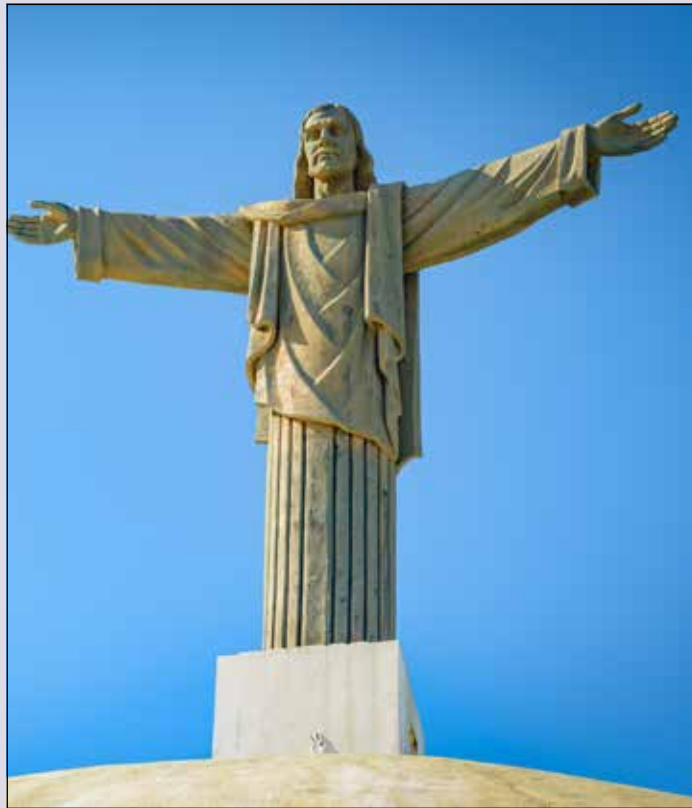
By the Rev. Jean Morris and
the Rev. Victor Kim, Working
Group on Narratives of Hope
and Possibility

The Assembly Council Working Group on Narratives of Hope and Possibility, with the approval of the General Assembly, continues its work, focusing on, among other tasks, identifying a narrative that will amplify the hope and possibility The Presbyterian Church in Canada believes God intends for the denomination.

Endorsing the group's work through a vote of confidence, the Assembly Council tasked the working group with exploring and recommending pathways that position the PCC as open to possibility regarding its future. The terms of reference note that the working group is responsible for reflecting on, reviewing, publicizing, and reinforcing faithful, Christ-centred narratives for the denomination to clarify and encourage the PCC to imagine, learn, and act upon narratives that can lead to renewal, transformation, and vitality for congregations, courts, and church agencies. Other responsibilities include providing a theological rationale that underpins any narrative and invitation to transformational change and presenting to the denomination faithful stories of hope and possibility that can lead to a renewal in the structures of the denomination. In addition, the working group has written an ecclesiology that will inform the proposed changes to the structure, leadership and use of resources while exploring exemplary practices and experiences of other Christian denominations in Canada and beyond.

The context for the ecclesiology based on John 20/21 – How did we get here?

In its report to the 2024 General Assembly, the Assembly Council noted that “stories, narratives, shape and define the identity of organizations and stories define our identity as the people of God and as The Presbyterian Church in Canada. What are the stories we tell as a church, what are the narratives that shape our identity as The Presbyterian Church in Canada as we approach our 150th anniversary as a denomination?” In March of 2023, the Assembly Council began to consider whether a new narrative was necessary for the PCC and how the prophetic role of the



Assembly Council would help to provide that new narrative for the church. The council discussed the opportunities and challenges currently facing the PCC and whether a primary narrative exists for our denomination. If so, what is that narrative, and is it the appropriate narrative for our current context?

There was agreement that the PCC is at an inflection point. Many forces are shaping our present situation, including a post-pandemic reckoning where trends observed prior to the pandemic have accelerated, such as decreased attendance, lack of called ministers, current ministers being stretched in terms of their responsibilities, etc. The council also agreed that our structural framework no longer works for a denomination drastically different from the one for which the structure was originally created. Consensus was reached that the PCC requires a new structure stemming from a new narrative and vision, one rooted in hope and possibility, embracing the vision of Jesus in his ministry.

Eventually, the council agreed to appoint a working group of roughly 20 people, clergy and lay, from different ministry areas, drawn from across the country, to spearhead this work. This working group would develop terms of reference that the Assembly Council would later approve and support, including regularly reporting back to the council with a view to presenting a final report for the 2025

General Assembly with recommendations around a narrative of hope and possibility.

The working group, convened by the Rev. Dr. Jean Morris, discerned that the Easter texts of John 20 and 21 would be the basis for any new narrative for the PCC. Two watchwords or phrases have emerged from those texts: “Jesus Shows Up” and “Jesus Sends Us.” As part of the terms of reference, an ecclesiology for the church based on the texts was created and shared with the Assembly Council. At the November 2024 meeting of the council, the report of the working group, including the ecclesiology, was adopted and supported by the council. The council gave the working group a vote of confidence in the work that has been done to date.

In the language used in the ecclesiology, “These chapters of Holy Scripture offer us a lens to interpret the life of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for our time. What (is offered) is a contextual theology of the church, an ecclesiology (treatment of the nature and purpose of the church) for our time.” The ecclesiology presented here is not a formal denominational document but is meant to guide the working group in their work.

The working group will present recommendations to the Assembly Council in March 2025 for its discernment and approval. This would lead to the Assembly Council reporting to the 2025 General Assembly with recommendations

regarding a narrative of hope and possibility for the denomination. The working group also envisions that emanating from the recommendations will be pathways concerning the leadership, structure, and stewardship of PCC resources that will potentially fundamentally shift the shape and preferred future of our denomination.

The Ecclesiology

The church: Jesus shows up and sends us

We hear hope, possibility, and a call from the Holy Spirit in John chapters 20 and 21. These chapters of Holy Scripture offer us a lens to interpret the life of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for our time. We offer below a contextual theology of the church, an ecclesiology (treatment of the nature and purpose of the church) for our time. This document is not offered as a complete, once-for-all or systematic ecclesiology. To do that, we would engage in a more robust treatment of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. In this brief treatment of the church, we focus on the church's apostolic (sent or missionary) nature for our time. It is a Christ-centred contextual mediation on the community to whom the risen Christ appears and sends to share in the mission of the Triune God. It is delivered in a colloquial register that presumes a careful reading of these chapters from John's gospel, but not specialized expertise.

We engaged this passage not just to read it, but to have it read us and our times and circumstances. We read and we prayed, and we asked for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We gave particular attention to John 20:19–23 and collectively discerned two watchwords from this passage: Jesus sends us. And Jesus shows up. We offer the ecclesiology below, with the passage wrapped around these two central features of the story of hope and possibility that it tells. There is peace for the sent, power for the sent, permission for the sent, motivation and assurance for the sent and finally, purpose for the sent. And through all of this, “the sent” have the assurance that Jesus shows up to gather, upbuild and send us. The presence and action of Jesus Christ grounds our stories of hope and possibility. In the light of this passage,

we have seen light and life and heard a call.

Jesus appears to the disciples – John 20:19–23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The church is Christ together with his people called to worship and serve him in all of life. *Living Faith*, 7.1.

Peace for the sent

Jesus speaks peace (twice here and again to Thomas in the next story). We need peace. We know we need it, in the first place, because Jesus speaks it to us. He knows our needs better than we do. Peace, shalom, is crucial for a sent people or we will be working out our anxieties on those to whom we are sent. If we want to be messengers of peace and reconciliation—Christ's peace—the peace of reconciliation with God and each other is a starting point. The gospel is the gospel of peace. When Jesus says, “It is finished,” (John 19:30), he means he fulfilled his mission. It also means we are finished. All our frustrated attempts to justify ourselves are over, individually, and corporately. He completed what we could not. Because he fulfilled his mission, our striving, anxiety, and fear about proving ourselves are done. We are beloved. Justification by faith, as our forebears taught, ends all our attempts to make peace with our performance-based culture by increasing our speed. We do move to mission and ministry, of course. We are blessed to be a blessing. However, we move to it in peace, not competition, not striving, not in wondering if we will be enough. Without his peace, participation in his mission will be attempts to prove ourselves rather than share

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God's reconciling love and life. Our anxieties about size, future and gravity in culture (all that keeps us locked up in excuses and fears) are answered by the gift of Christ's peace. Jesus Christ has done what we cannot, and we live into that peace as sent people. We are sent at peace with God to speak peace to the fears of others.

A non-anxious mission also means that we might just have Christ's peace spoken to us from the world. John reminds us that the Word made flesh is the light that enlightens everyone (John 1:9). A radical word of peace might just come to us from Christ through humane movements in the broader world and other faith traditions. The rest engendered by the peace of Christ means that the church can serve as a humble neighbour, and not act as though the church has propriety rights to the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's church does not have a mission. God's mission in Christ has a church.

Power for the sent

Jesus gives (breathes) the Spirit. The coming of the Spirit is the birth of the church. This is John's Pentecost. Just as God breathed into the dust of the earth to create humans, so Jesus breathes the Spirit back into God's beloved creation. It is a new creation. The strength for service as sent people is given. Barth says, "The church is a creature of the Word." We do not give ourselves life. The breath of God enlivens us. It is not just once; it is again and again. We are awakened to life out of the constant temptation to either denial (we just need to step up our efforts) or despair (there is nothing we can do). With the gift of the Spirit comes both Christian character, the fruit of the Spirit, a call to sanctification, and the gifts of the Spirit, a call to service. Both are donations by God. Sent people will be gifted and sanctified (set apart) people by the breath of God.

Our tradition emphasizes two things at once when it comes to the ministry of the Spirit. The Spirit instructs us. Calvin said the Spirit is our "inner teacher." Our prayer for illumination in the Reformed tradition is an invocation for the Spirit to make us porous so that we hear scripture as the Word of God to the church. Jesus' disciples hear his Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. What makes scripture holy is

the action of the Spirit amid our listening for words of life. The Spirit also transforms those who hear the gospel. Hearing is not just about understanding, it is about a changed life, a transformed existence full of the love of God and mercy and compassion for those beloved of God. The Spirit is breathed, and the disciples get animated for life in the new creation in Christ. God calls us to inhabit and testify to a reconciled world that is alive to God because it shares in God's life.

Permission for the sent

Jesus commissions. The Risen Christ authorizes mission. It begins with Mary to whom Jesus shows up and sends to the disciples and it continues when Jesus shows up to the disciples and sends them to the world. Whatever cautions we might have (and they are relatively important given the history of colonialism, sexism, and racism), the risen Lord Jesus Christ shows up and sponsors mission to the world.

Our church has confessed and repented of mission that co-opted the gospel of Jesus Christ to westernize Indigenous persons and cultures, and the perverse consequences of that racist program evidenced in residential schools and the doctrine of discovery. Please see presbyterian.ca/indigenous-justice/ for a more complete history. We want a different future than the past with Indigenous people. The church is sent by Jesus Christ to people made in God's image, who are actively loved by God. Every person has dignity, and a preciousness endowed by God, and cultures and religions other than our own are places where Christ is already at work.

Some whom we encounter belong to other religions, and already have a faith. We recognize that truth and goodness are the work of God's Spirit, the author of all truth. We should not address others in a spirit of arrogance. *Living Faith*, 9.2.1.

While taken up with meekness and humility, sentness is not an optional extra. Jesus sends us and mission is rooted in the very nature of God. As the Father sends the Son and the Spirit, the church finds itself implicated in God's eccentric movement toward the world. God seems determined not to be God apart from fellowship with humans. The Triune God moves out from God's own life to create and then engage and

love the other for life to the fullest. The God whose mission catches us up in love and reconciliation calls us to catch up others in life.

Mission comes hard for establishment people. We are learning non-imperial mission, and we might just learn it best from the global church, and denominations (and faith traditions) that have never had most favoured religion status. Other churches in the world have never been established and have participated in the mission of the Risen Christ from the margins. We are learning to be missionaries to a culture we thought we owned. And mission is now a real test of whether we can participate in God's mission, authorized by the risen Lord Jesus Christ, without cultural props and privilege. Permission becomes compassionate command in this passage, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you." Jesus was sent on a mission of reconciliation and forgiveness, to bring life to the world. We participate in his mission.

...in the spirit of humility, as beggars telling others where food is found, we point to life in Christ. *Living Faith*, 9.2.1.

We have too easily accepted the gathered church to be our purpose. The church easily becomes the gathered to seek God's blessing upon us and for God to answer our needs. That is not wrong per se. But the reality is we need to refocus on a larger narrative that the church does not exist for itself but for God's reconciling mission in the world. Reform and confession might just be the order of the day. The Risen Christ incites followers to fish on the other side of Christendom, outside the company of the gathered.

The church is in constant need of reform because of the failure and sin which mark its life in every age. *Living Faith*, 7.1.2.

Jesus sends disciples who become apostles. Interesting that discipleship is not an end in itself; it is on the way to graduation as an apostle (sent one). The gathering initiated by Jesus is not to build anxiety but peace and a formative sense of participating in his mission of forgiveness, reconciliation, and life for the world beloved of God. The movement of the disciples found in all the gospels is this: gathered, upbuilt and sent. The gathered disciples are upbuilt by Jesus' life and teaching and the result is going out to tell in action, certainly, but also in words

of witness to new life in Christ. Without words of testimony, people will not know what Christians are being a good example of. In John 1:35-43, Andrew and an unnamed disciple stay with Jesus, and the outcome is that Andrew goes and tells someone else. The centripetal movement of disciples gathering results in the centrifugal movement of apostles going. In Reformed theology the priesthood of all believers is connected to vocation. The saints participate in a common vocation to bear witness to the gospel in all of life. We gather, we are upbuilt, and the outcome is this: we are sent into the world as agents of God's love and mercy in Christ in the power of the Spirit.

And the sending cannot be about the love of power but the power of love and life. The Jesus who authorizes the church to go, has nail marks in his hands (John 20:20). To be commissioned by the risen Christ in power of his resurrection is to participate in the suffering of the world beloved by God in the hope that God will bring life to all things. Our hope now, says Ruben Alves, is an "aperitif" of the new creation in its fullness.

Motivation and assurance for the sent

Love is the motivation. Here we go to the larger context of our John passage. "This is my commandment: that you love each other as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this—that a person should lay down his life for his friends." "By this will all people know that you are my disciples if you love each other." "Peter, do you love me?" "Feed my sheep." Mission is rooted in love for the people whom God loves. "For God so loved the world." The world and all people are beloved. Jesus sends us to share in the Father's mission empowered by the Spirit for the love of the world God loves. Mission that is not rooted in love (but in ambition or anxiety about our place in the world) ends up colonizing and learns little from where and to whom it goes.

Love means seeking the best for others and is the mark of a Christian. Love for God leads to love for others. We cannot claim to love God, whom we do not see, if we hate those about us, whom we do see. Love of God and of neighbour fulfills the law of God. *Living Faith*, 8.3.2.

And importantly, those who Jesus sends are beloved by God. When disciples gather in

a locked room, Jesus shows up. It is worth noting that Jesus comes to the community gathered, even when they gather discouraged and afraid. When disciples go back to what they were doing before they met Jesus, as though it were possible to go BC in an AD world, Jesus shows up. He comes to them when they were not looking for him. His covenant faithfulness to his followers is relentless. Jesus comes to disturb their hunkered down lives because he has plans for them. He comes to them fishing, back at their old profession. He comes to disciples when in their first foray at mission to Thomas—never was there an easier convert—they are total failures. But when Jesus shows up, he makes their words of testimony about his resurrection and new life work for faith and confession. He did the same with Mary's witness to the disciples. Thomas says at the apex of John's Gospel, when Jesus shows up: "My Lord, and my God" (John 20:28). The church of all times lives in the hope that Jesus Christ is present to the words of testimony spoken about him. He uses human speaking to speak. He will be present to his witnesses. "Blessed are those who have not seen but believe." And the truth of the saying is rooted in the reality that they are blessed and believe because Jesus shows up still in the power of the Spirit.

"Although the church is at present time hardly to be distinguished from a dead or at best a sick man, there is no reason for despair, for the Lord raises up his own suddenly, as he waked from the grave. This we must clearly remember, lest, when the church fails to shine forth, we conclude too quickly that her light has died utterly away. But the church in the world is so preserved that she rises suddenly from the dead.

"Her very preservation through the days is due to a succession of such miracles. Let us cling to the remembrance that she is not without her resurrection, or rather, not without her many resurrections." (John Calvin on Micah 4:6, commentary)

Purpose for the sent

What are disciples turned apostles sent to do? Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation are in the immediate context of the reading. It is an amazing passage in the sense that absolving one another

of what we have been to become what we have not been in Jesus' name is a work of the church. This forgiveness in which Jesus is active in his follower's forgiving is for "life."

John writes his gospel for the sake of life. "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing (either coming to or continuing or both) you might have life in his name." Life is a big deal in John. He loves to heap up the adjectives in front of it. Abundant, eternal, everlasting life, life that just cannot be contained. Its source is the second person of the Trinity, "In him was the life and his life is the light of the world" (1:4). John distinguishes between life as biological animation (bios) and life

as bestowed by God (Zoe). The second is a quality of life that God gives that is full, abundant, and eternal. "Eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom God sent" (John 17:3). The sent bear witness to the life God gives and wants to give the world through Jesus Christ. There is more to life than upright and walking. Fellowship (sharing in the life of God) is what John aims at. Life is rooted in friendship with God—no small thing!

Augustine said that the Holy Spirit is the bond of life between the Father and the Son. Calvin said, the Holy Spirit is the bond of love between believers and Christ.

In John 17:21, Jesus prays that as he is in the Father and the Father in him, so his disciples

might be in them. Life is nothing less than participation in the very life of God. We bear witness to the life of God given for the world in communion. We are nourished by the life of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit through the effective signs of bread and wine offered and received in faith. In the washing of water over us at baptism, forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God apply here and now by the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit. Salvation in John is having our lives, and the life of the world, wed to and so animated by the very life of God. That is what we mean by fellowship (a common share in the life of God that never runs out). That is what disciples turned apostles invite the world God loves into. The Father sends

the Son, and the Son sends the Spirit, and the church, corporately and individually, gets caught up in the movement to invite the world into the intimacy of God's life of love. We invite people to participate in the benefits of God's own life in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

"Come not because you are strong, but because you are weak. Come not because any goodness of your own gives you a right, but because you need grace and mercy. Come because you love the Lord a little and would like to love him more. O taste and see that the Lord is good."

And gathered, fed and upbuilt by the life of God, Jesus Christ sends us to bring life to the world and find life in the world

in his name in the power of the Spirit. "As the Father has sent me, so send I you!" Mission is a holy calling of the church.

As God sent Christ to us, so Christ sends us into the world. We are here to proclaim Christ in word and deed. *Living Faith*, 9.1.1.

Mission is evangelism, the offer of salvation to all people in the power of the Holy Spirit, to be received through faith in Christ. It asks people to repent of their sins, to trust Christ, to be baptized and enter a life of honouring Jesus as Lord. *Living Faith*, 9.1.2.

Mission is service, a call to help people in need and to permeate all of life with the compassion of God. *Living Faith*, 9.1.3.

PROFILE

An Interview with Mark Glanville

New CML Director at St. Andrew's Hall

By the Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart,
Dean of St. Andrew's Hall in
Vancouver, B.C.

The Centre for Missional Leadership at St. Andrew's Hall in Vancouver, B.C., turns 10 years old this year and has recently welcomed its new director, the Rev. Dr. Mark Glanville, who joined the team from Regent College. I sat down with Mark for a conversation about his new work, his passion for missional discipleship, and as an opportunity to introduce himself to the wider Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Ross: Welcome, Mark, we're so glad to have you with us at St. Andrew's Hall. Tell us a little bit about your background in life and ministry.

Mark: I started out as a full-time jazz pianist in Sydney, Australia. Since then, I've worked as a pastor in urban, missional churches for 14 years. I have blended ministry with scholarship and teaching, including writing five books. And I still play a ton of piano! In combining practices of scholarship, teaching, pastoring and music, I've followed an uncommon path. But I feel that it is the synergy of these four things that has shaped me to write and teach for the church with clarity and creativity. Oh, and I'm a Presbyterian!

Ross: That's great! What excites you about your role as the Director of CML?

Mark: I have long recognized that my vocational goal is to research, teach, write, speak and play to nourish Christian leaders to creatively reimagine what the church can be and do in post-Christian societies, with the Bible in our hands. There is a remarkable resonance between my vocational goal and the mission statement for the Centre for Missional Leadership: Equipping pastors and leaders for the church of tomorrow, today. I love the use of the word "today," as it reminds me of the urgency of re-learning Christian leadership and pastoral work in our new cultural moment.

Ross: Yes, and what would you say are the most pressing needs for equipping leaders in congregations in Canada today?

Mark: It's difficult to overstate the significance of the cultural shift we are experiencing. In our lifetime, our societies have become (or are becoming) post-Christian. The union of Christianity and the state fostered seventeen hundred years ago by the Edict of Milan (313 CE) during the reign of Constantine the Great has become undone—in our lifetime. I believe that we need to learn to love our



The Rev. Dr. Mark Glanville, director of the Centre for Missional Leadership.

new cultural context, not fear it. The clock won't turn back. While the church is used to seeking power and experiencing power, we need to develop new muscle memory for living beautifully on the margins of culture. So, we need imagination for how we can receive Jesus' healing and extend Jesus' healing in our local neighbourhood. And we need to learn to nourish faith in an era where Christians are often plagued with doubt. We need to learn how to be truly local, how to belong within our local human and more-than-human ecosystem.

Ross: That's terrific, so why does missional theology matter in the life of the church?

Mark: Missional theology matters because the church is a "sent" people. After his resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, "As the father sent me, I am sending you." With these words Jesus is showing us that our witness isn't just something that the church

does—one task among many. No, witness is the very identity of the church, the reason for our existence. We are sent to live as an advertisement to the beauty and redemption of Jesus.

Ross: Indeed. Now, over the last decade CML has produced several books to resource Christian leaders and their communities for mission. You're a prolific author and will now be adding to that resource production through CML. Can you tell us a bit about your latest publications and how they might bless the church?

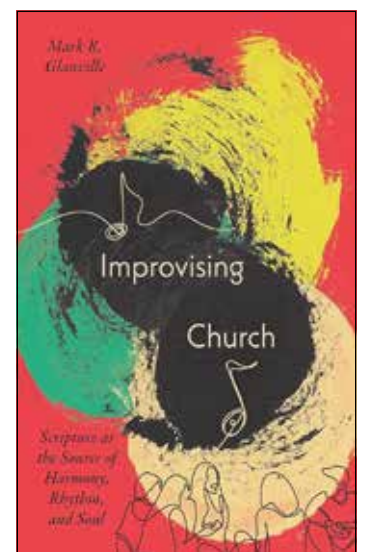
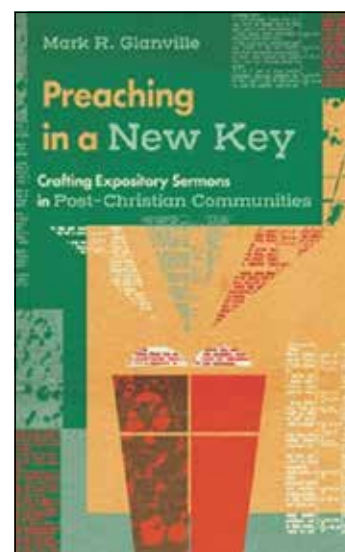
Mark: My most recent book, *Improvising Church: Scripture as the Source of Harmony, Rhythm, and Soul*, is a guidebook for churches in post-Christian society, with the Bible in our hands. It is full of neighbourhood, tenderness and creativity. In March of 2025,

my book *Preaching in a New Key: Crafting Expository Sermons in Post-Christian Neighbourhoods* will be released. It is the first book teaching the craft of Christ-centred expository preaching for post-Christian neighbourhoods. This book is for both new and experienced pastors. I also have a podcast, Blue Note Theology, the only podcast in the world hosted from a grand piano. Check it out!

Ross: Thanks, Mark! We're excited to have you leading the CML team and blessing the wider church. How can leaders in The Presbyterian Church in Canada get a hold of you for conversation and consultation?

Mark: I look forward to connecting, and they can send me a note at mglanville@standrews.edu.

To learn more about the Centre for Missional Leadership, visit standrews.edu/cml.



PROFILE


Prime Minister Mackenzie King in his Laurier House study, circa 1945. PHOTO CREDIT: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-075053.

By Walter Meyer zu Erpen,
 President, *Survival Research*
 Institute of Canada in Victoria, B.C.

Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874–1950) grew up in a strongly Presbyterian family, read his Bible every day, and attended St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, almost every Sunday, for half a century.

Yet Canada's longest-serving Prime Minister (1922–1930 and 1935–1948) was also its most persistent spiritualist and psychic investigator. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of King's birth on Dec. 17, 1874, White Crow Books in the UK has published *The Spiritualist Prime Minister*, by Canadian cultural historian Anton Wagner. Wagner's two-volume biography traces the influence of Spiritualism on King's Christian faith and how both affected his life and actions in the political field.

The Prime Minister's father, John King, was deeply religious and was for 20 years active in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Berlin (the original name of Kitchener), Ont., as secretary of its board of management. Mackenzie King and his siblings attended Sunday school, and with their parents, Sunday services in the morning and evening. His sisters Jenny and Bella taught Sunday school at St. Andrew's.

King's first contact with the supernatural occurred during his third year at the University of Toronto in 1893. After praying that God would show him how matters would turn out, he opened his Bible seven nights in a row and found verses which spoke of his going into the ministry. He came to believe that, through his Bible reading, God was speaking directly to him.

Entering the ministry remained one of his life goals—along with becoming a university professor—until 1900 when he accepted appointment as Deputy Minister of Labour in Wilfrid Laurier's government.

King turned to Spiritualism—

Mackenzie King: Canada's Spiritualist Prime Minister

the belief that personal consciousness continues after the death of the physical body and that communication with the deceased in the spirit world is possible—through his deep love for his mother, Isabel Grace Mackenzie. When she fell ill following the deaths of his older sister Bella and their father John King, William nursed her in his home in Ottawa for nearly a year. Isabel died on Dec. 17, 1917, King's birthday and the day he was defeated running for Parliament in the general election. His friend the Rev. Thomas Eakin (1871–1958) presided at his mother's funeral service in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Toronto.

King frequently saw his mother in his dreams. She had promised she would tell him from the other world if she were still alive and near him. Two months after her death, Isabel appeared radiantly beautiful in a dream vision, opened her lips and said, "I am alive."

King communicated with his mother through her portrait, which remains on display in his study in Laurier House, his Ottawa residence. He created an altar in front of her painting on which stood a little casket containing Isabel's wedding ring and a lock of her hair, family photographs—including one of Isabel's father, William Lyon Mackenzie, the leader of the failed 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada—and a small Iona cross like the one standing over the family grave in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Toronto. King believed that it was in Iona, Scotland, where paganism and Christianity united.

He was certain that his mother, father, sister and brother were his guardian angels who interceded for him with God and brought him messages from God.

A day after King was sworn in as Prime Minister following the 1926 election, he attended a communion service at St. Andrew's in Ottawa, led by Thomas Eakin. The Reverend preached on Jacob's wrestling with the angel and spoke of the God of Bethel.

In his diary, King recorded, "It was a wonderful sermon, and part of the mystical working together of all things." He invited Eakin to lunch at Laurier House two days before Eakin's induc-



Mackenzie King and Etta Wriedt at Kingsmere in 1934. PHOTO CREDIT: LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA C-9065

tion as the head of Knox College at the University of Toronto and read him his typed record of one of the prophecies by the Kingston clairvoyant Rachel Bleaney that guided King to victory in the 1926 election.

"I told him of the way in which everything had been revealed to me," the Prime Minister wrote in his diary. "It was most remarkable, as I told it all to Eakin, I felt more certain than ever of its being word from the Beyond & the loved ones, whose bodies he had led away in their last mortal sleep; their spirits have passed into the inheritance of immortal life."

In 1933, Arthur Doughty, Dominion Archivist in Ottawa, introduced King to table rapping in which spirits communicated, letter by letter, with the living. When Eakin attended one of these table rapping sessions and placed his hands on the small table, the first word spelled was "Eak."

That same year, in Winnipeg, King met medical doctor Thomas Glendenning (T. Glen) Hamilton (1873–1935), Canada's most prominent psychic investigator and a fellow Presbyterian. Hamilton and his wife, Lillian (1880–1956), were devout members of the Presbyterian Church and, after church union in 1925, of the United Church of Canada. Hamilton was an elected elder of his local congregation from 1907 until his death, and helped build Winnipeg's King Memorial Church.

King was convinced of the authenticity of the Hamiltons' psychic investigations. Six weeks after the 1935 election that returned him as Prime Minister, he wrote that Dr. Hamilton's death

of a heart attack was a national loss. "Science, and even civilization itself has lost one of its great servants."

Most Spiritualists in the UK and Canada were Christians. A minority regarded Christ as a great spiritual leader who performed miracles, but not as the son of God. The American medium Etta Wriedt (1861–1942) from Detroit, considered one of the world's greatest mediums, shared this belief. King held over 60 séances with Wriedt in Detroit and Ottawa from 1932 to 1938 and was greatly troubled by her belittling of Christianity.

King had invited Thomas Eakin to a few of these sittings in 1932. But after nearly three years participating in séances with Wriedt, King recorded in his diary, "What we get in spiritualism is the lowest plane—the borderland betwixt this world and the next—where earth influences continue to control, and where night and day are intermingled as at twilight. It is the twilight region and must be so regarded."

He concluded, "The real light—the source of Truth and Justice and Love, cometh from on High—a Higher Source—and finds its way more immediately to us by the conscience in Man—the 'celestial and immortal voice'—rather than by what is seen or heard in these glimpses of the unseen—faith remains the true avenue of approach to God—and Christ the way, truth & the life."

King had already stated after 19 séances with Etta Wriedt in 1932 that he would not listen to what was said by others, but would "guide my actions by God within me, by what I instinctively

feel and know to be right & best... 'the celestial and immortal voice of conscience' is the one sure aim, and by it alone shall I seek to be guided." In 1934, Mary Fulford, widow of Senator George Taylor Fulford, who had introduced King to Etta Wriedt, gave him a copy of George André's *The True Light, or, The Gospel of Christ in the Light of Spiritual Science*. King liked "André's emphasis on Conscience—the celestial and immortal voice" and was determined to hold to "the voice of God in my soul." "The Christ is the True Light," he recorded in his diary, "Christ who revealed the glory of God to man."

When he reflected in 1938 on the 19th anniversary of his election as Leader of the Liberal Party, King concluded that, "There can be no explanation of this other than as part of some plan and some purpose, which my life is intended to serve and to illustrate. The children reaping where their fathers have sown, God's covenant being fulfilled." While he acknowledged his personal and political failings, he concluded that, "The only thing is now to recognize all this, and begin anew, yielding obedience to my conscience in all things, at all times, and trusting to God's direction through that source—the celestial and immortal voice of conscience, 'God's inmost image in the soul.'"

With the celestial and immortal voice of conscience as his guide, King learned to become his own medium by asking spirits questions over a "little table," hearing the spirits' replies in his mind and writing down their responses.

Anton Wagner admirably traces this evolution in Mackenzie King's beliefs and occult practices in *The Spiritualist Prime Minister*. His detailed examination of King's diaries and correspondence enables readers to make up their own minds to what degree his combination of Spiritualist and Christian belief systems influenced how he governed Canada for over two decades. King's diaries are available online through Library and Archives Canada.

For volume descriptions and table of contents, or to read my foreword, visit survivalresearch.ca/TSPM.

WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

WMS Fall Rally in Simcoe

*By Jane Ashenden,
Paris Presbyterial Secretary*

On Saturday, Oct. 5, about 40 people gathered at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Simcoe, Ont., to learn about healing and reconciliation. The event was organized by the Paris Presbyterial Women's Missionary Society with the help of our Mission Circle group from St. Paul's.

The day started with coffee and snacks, then we met in the sanctuary for a sing-along led by Becky Stewart. Deb Melnyk, WMS Paris Presbyterial Chair, welcomed us and led us in a prayer to help us focus on honouring the Indigenous children who were forced to

attend residential schools and the intergenerational Survivors who continue to struggle. Greetings were also shared by the Rev. Mikal from St. Paul's, Judy MacIntosh on behalf of the WMS Synodical for Southern Ontario, and from Cathy Reid on behalf of the WMS National Council.

Many of us wore orange or orange shirts that day in honour of the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, which occurred the week before. We took part in a short worship service led by Lisa McLaughlin-Kent from Paris Presbyterial. She reminded us of our scripture for the day, Ephesians 4:32, and included a translation from a First Nations version

of the New Testament. An offering was received during the worship and was directed toward a WMS Together We Can Project—the Hummingbird Ministries in British Columbia. Through Hummingbird Ministries, Indigenous and non-Indigenous children are being taught traditional stories, dance, drumming and other cultural traditions.

Worship was followed by a talk from our guest speaker, Katharine Sisk, of The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Justice Ministries department. Katharine provided a highly organized and informative presentation about the legacy of colonization and residential schools, and the work of healing and reconciliation in Canada.

She included information on The Presbyterian Church in Canada's role in these processes. She gave us much-needed historical context and information to help us understand these issues and she answered questions after her talk.

Time was spent socializing with people from the congregations of St. Paul's, Embro, Woodstock, Paris, Simcoe and Port Dover. We worked together on an Orange Shirt Day activity, where each table group discussed the issues of truth, healing and reconciliation in Canada. We thought about how we can put our apologies to Indigenous people into action. We recorded some of our thoughts and possible actions on large orange shirt posters that could be shared with all the churches participating. Discussion and sharing showed us that we need to admit our responsibility as non-Indigenous Canadians for our part in the history of residential schools and other mistreatment of Indigenous peoples. We should continue to learn about these issues and lessons of history and not forget them. We can listen to Indigenous stories of residential school Survivors and speak up when we see Indigenous people being treated unfairly. We can make an effort to change our



way of thinking about Indigenous people, realizing that many of us heard untruths and unfair stereotypes when we grew up.

We ended the day with a few business items and thanks to St. Paul's for hosting the event. Deb Melnyk shared a picture book by Phillis Webstad, the creator of Orange Shirt Day, titled *Today is Orange Shirt Day*, and we then sang a closing benediction.

The Fall Rally was a day to learn, pray and confront some difficult issues. Hopefully, all those who attended heard truth and learned ways to work toward a future of reconciliation and healing.



National Office Position Openings

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is seeking qualified individuals for two full-time positions at the national office: Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer and Associate Secretary for Canadian Ministries. We encourage courts of the church to consider nominating candidates from diverse backgrounds and experiences who are qualified for consideration. The PCC is committed to creating an inclusive workplace that reflects our diverse community to ensure we are best equipped to serve the church. To view all available job openings and pulpit vacancies, visit presbyterian.ca.

Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer (closing date: March 15, 2025)

In November 2024, Assembly Council began the search process for the position of Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer (CFO) and called for nominations. Presbyteries are invited to submit nominations, with permission from the person they wish to nominate.

The CFO serves as a member of the national office Management Team and shares overall management responsibility of the national offices equally and co-operatively with other members of the team; acts as secretary and treasurer of the Trustee Board of The Presbyterian Church in Canada; serves on the Investment Advisory Committee of the Trustee Board; serves on various national church boards, commit-

tees and ecumenical bodies as the position or assignment warrants; and performs other tasks as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the Assembly Council, primarily through its Finance Committee.

Associate Secretary for Canadian Ministries (closing date: March 24, 2025)

The Life and Mission Agency of the PCC is calling for nominations and applications for the position of Associate Secretary for Canadian Ministries.

Among many elements, the Associate Secretary is responsible for working with openness and trust in a collegial fashion with all other officers of the church, as befits a disciple of Christ; creating an evolving vision for an innovative, multi-faceted strategy to assist ministers, elders, congregations and other ministries to find and use resources that are helpful in robust and healthy ministries; producing resources to support denominational initiatives; liaising with presbyteries as they oversee new church development, renewing ministries, ministries with Indigenous people, rural and remote ministries and specialized ministries; and carrying out of all aspects of the position in a way that preserves and enhances the witness of the church as servants of Jesus Christ, and to ensure that the assets and resources of the church are used appropriately.

BOOK REVIEW

A Short but Powerful Treatise on Loving Our Enemies

By Callie Long,
Communications Office

Who Are Our Enemies and How Do We Love Them?

Written by Hyung Jin Kim Sun
Herald Press, Harrisonburg,
Virginia, 2020

Shortly after he joined the national office last year, during one of several conversations related to our respective areas of work, Hyung Jin Kim Sun (or Pablo Kim Sun, as we know him), The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Intercultural Liaison, shared a book with me that he had written, entitled *Who Are Our Enemies and How Do We Love Them?* I wanted to read the book, given our fractured times. Reading through the Contents page especially offered the promise of guidance on nonviolence as a loving, compassionate Christian response to the awful violence that beset the world last year. and some difficult conversations with people related to some geopolitical violence. I was not disappointed, as this little book goes a long way in equipping the reader with practical insights to help navigate these complex issues.

Pablo, who holds a strong conviction in the gospel of peace, which is foundational to and informs all aspects of his ministry as Intercultural Liaison, starts the little book with a personal story of his Christian nonviolent response to being physically attacked and robbed. Guided by Matthew 5:40 ("If anyone wants to [...] take your coat, give your cloak as well."), Pablo threads the needle beautifully between how he may have lost "some personal belongings" but gained important insights into "nonviolent engage-

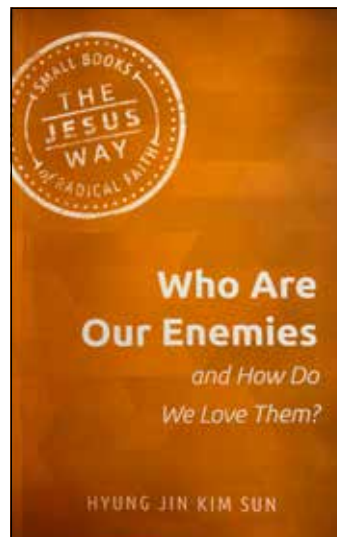
ment" (p. 12). Anecdotes, stories, and solid research are used to illustrate his interpretations of complex notions, such as: effectiveness versus faithfulness—the myth of redemptive violence; just peacemaking—the effectiveness of nonviolence; and a look at power and the structural aspects of violence.

Only 83 pages long, the book is aptly part of the series: Small Books of Radical Faith (The Jesus Way). Yet this tiny book contains a profound message if you're interested in finding ways to "love and engage" (p. 12) with those who may want to harm you by showing how "the Christian practice of nonviolence [...] relates to Christian discipleship, and how to apply it concretely in our contemporary daily life" (p. 13). The book does come with the caveat that it is not meant to answer all the questions readers may have about practicing a nonviolent Christian approach to violence. It is also not only intended for Christians. Nor is it meant to make those who choose not to practice pacifism feel guilty or in some way lesser than those who do. Instead, as Pablo writes, this book is designed to "deepen [one's] faith" (p. 13) and, as I read it, also think through ethical and morality-entangled frameworks that justify violence. Above all, this is a book that encourages one to pause and reflect.

The six short chapters focus on the following: Jesus' treatment of his enemies (Chapter 1); connecting one's faith and spiritual life to the practice of nonviolence (Chapter 2); a discussion on the views of those who oppose pacifism (Chapter 3); examining the opinions of those who are part of the historic peace church

movement and some productive outcomes from the debate between the two divergent groups (Chapter 4); how nonviolence works in the public sphere and whether it can bring about social transformation (Chapter 5); and finally, in Chapter 6, how nonviolence can be applied to our daily lives. While the chapters may be short, Pablo doesn't offer easy answers in the vein of directives—in other words, this is not a "how to" book. Instead, he provides insights into how we can understand violence within the context that "we all were once God's enemies" (Romans 5:10), according to the apostle Paul prior to Christ's intervention reconciling us with God (p. 21). Despite Jesus having suffered great violence, he chose not to resist with violence. A bonus is the discussion and reflection questions at the end of the short book (p. 71-3), meaning the book is highly suitable for individual or group study efforts. Added to this is the helpful glossary of essential terms used, also highlighted throughout the book with bold text for ease of reference.

As a writer, Pablo's strength is anchored in his ability to wrest the theoretical concepts that frame our understandings of violence (and conflict) from the realm of the abstract and to scaffold it firmly by using stories, biblical or otherwise. As humans, it's been said that our brains are hardwired for story—it's "how we make strategic sense of the otherwise overwhelming world around us" (Lisa Cron, *Wired for Story*, p. 8). Using story in this way, Pablo's arguments are straightforward, even as the task he assigns his readers—contemplating the profound implications of a non-



violent, Christian approach to violence and conflict—is demanding. But Pablo knows this will be the case. Even in his introduction, he asks his readers to join him with an "open heart and mind" on this journey (p. 13).

Violence and conflict are ubiquitous. Add fear and the primeval instinct to survive to the mix, and arguments for using violence as an efficient and effective way to "stop an immediate danger and to bring about a quick solution" may seem like the less risky of options (p. 27). Within this context, it is essential to note that nonviolence is not merely the absence of violence but should be considered an active and transformational engagement with societal structures, different forms of violence and oppression in a way that allows us to pursue ethical resistance. Therefore, as Pablo points out, our enemies are not one-dimensional caricatures, violent as they may seem. Instead, it behooves us to recognize that "God's image is also in our enemies and that Jesus died for them as well." For Pablo, by adopting this lens, we can begin to understand that even those we deem our enemies need "forgiveness [...], the truth, and needed to be helped" (p. 31). These are challenging concepts, especially when associated with a general acceptance of what is known as the Just War Theory and linked to redemptive violence, which proposes that justified violence can overcome evil and give us a better world in the long run.

Drawing on the work of theologian and biblical scholar Walter Wink, Pablo notes that the "myth of redemptive violence is deeply rooted in Western society [...] even though we acknowledge that violence is a terrible thing and believe that we should avoid it as much as possible [yet seeing it as] ultimately a necessary evil to fight against evil" (p. 34-5). It is the notion that there is no other option but to fight to "protect [our] freedoms, rights and people" (p. 35-6). Yet, as Pablo argues, there is always the option to choose that "the resurrected Jesus [created] a new reality" within the context of a world in which the "myth of redemptive violence" is so pervasive and "prevalent and deeply rooted in our cultural DNA and imagination" (p. 39).

How do we then respond to violence without participating in it? In his final chapter, "Non-violence for What?" Pablo steps back from violence on a grand scale (war, for instance) to focus on violence that operates as structural violence. I am reminded of the scholar Rob Nixon's idea of "slow violence," which, given its often non-explosive and non-spectacular nature, yet pervasive and enduring "incremental" and "accretive" operations, is usually not even thought of as violence at all (*Slow Violence*, p. 2). As Pablo puts it, despite our democratic society where the emphasis falls on "equality, liberty, and justice," structural violence—the "physical and spiritual harm that certain groups of people experience as a result of the unequal distribution of power and privilege"—prevails (p. 60-1).

Finally, before ending, Pablo writes that when it comes to power, adopting a nonviolent Christian approach to violence does not render us powerless. Instead, it frees us to lean into Jesus' teachings on "how to use power in the right way to resist evil nonviolently" (p. 65). Pablo's question to his readers is whether we choose to resist violence and oppression violently and lacking in love or nonviolently, full of Christ's love.

HELPFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

For Members, Treasurers, Presbytery Clerks & Clerks of Session

Available for download at: presbyterian.ca/pensionandbenefits/helpful-resources

- Your Group Benefits Plan Booklet
- Pension Plan Booklet
- Treasurer's Guide to Pension & Benefits
- Administration Guide for Presbytery Clerks & Clerks of Session
- Automatic Withdrawal Program



REFLECTION

The Present Crisis: Public Education

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

History professor at Boston College in Massachusetts and author of the important daily newsletter *Letters from an American*, Heather Cox Richardson, in writing about U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to abolish the Department of Education, cited the importance of public education for one of America's principal founders. In 1786, Thomas Jefferson wrote to a friend: "No other sure foundation (but public education) can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness... Preach, my dear Sir, a crusade against ignorance; establish and improve the law for educating the common people. Let our countrymen know that the people alone

can protect us from the evils of kings, nobles and priests, and that the tax which will be paid for this purpose is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance."

Jefferson's words could hardly be more timely for our present crisis. After several generations of degrading the public school system—supporting vouchers for private schools, promoting charter schools, limiting the study of history and civics—the political scene has changed. The kings (authoritarians like Trump), nobles (their billionaire courtiers), and priests (right wing Evangelical ministers, Roman Catholic clergy, and Christian nationalists) have carried the day. MAGA is in

for another term, and this time, they control the White House, both Houses of Congress and the Supreme Court. Now we are all waiting to see what the cost will be "when we leave the people in ignorance."

During the election, much was made of the dividing line between college-educated and non-college-educated voters. The commentators generally assumed that the college-educated population would vote Democratic and the non-college folk would be heavily MAGA. That seemed to be the case. But, since when has non-college-educated been equated with ignorance, with no interest in the Constitution, in democracy? Surely those fundamentals of our history and our culture are covered in public school education.



Are history and political science only college courses?

We are entering a critical period here in North America. Yes, we must wait and see what happens: which dire promises will be enacted, and which were mere bluster. But we can do more than to wait and see. Those of us who believe in public education can do all that we can to protect and enhance education in what is left of the system in our own locale. And those of us who are Christians—whether Evangelical, mainline Protestant, Pentecostal or Roman Catholic—can do all

in our power to proclaim and live a gospel of good will, of humility, of kindness for neighbours and strangers alike.

As long as the present coalition of power—wealth and racial hatred and religious nationalism—goes unchallenged, many of us will be living without hope. Let us recall Jefferson's call to action when we fight for a restored system of education: "the people (alone) can protect us against the evils of kings, nobles and priests."

Read more from the Rev. Philip J. Lee at medium.com/@pjlee_39329.

PULPIT VACANCIES

Atlantic Provinces

Alliston, WellSpring
(full-time minister)

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

Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Almonte, Community
(full-time minister)

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

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

Lancaster, St. Andrew's & Martintown, St. Andrew's (full time, 2-point pastoral charge)

Manotick, Knox
(full-time minister)

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

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

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

Stouffville, St. James
(full-time minister)

Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

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

Grand Valley, Knox
(part-time minister)

Harriston, Knox-Calvin
(50%-time minister)

Keswick, Keswick
(full-time minister)

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

Markham, Celebration
(full-time minister)

Milton, Boston
(full-time minister)

South Monohan, Centreville Harmony (80%-time minister)

Toronto, Ghanaian
(interim minister, contract)

Toronto, Mimico
(full-time minister)

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

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

Vaughan, Vaughan Community
(full-time youth minister)

Southwestern Ontario

Ailsa Craig, Beechwood
(part-time minister)

Chatham, First
(full-time minister)

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

Hamilton, Central
(full-time minister)

Hamilton, Trinity
(full-time minister)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alberta & the Northwest

Calgary, Calvin Hungarian
(full-time minister)

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

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

British Columbia

Campbell River, Trinity
(full-time minister)

Surrey, City Centre
(full-time minister)

Sooke, Knox (full-time minister and church planter)

Vancouver, Fairview
(full-time minister)

DEATH NOTICES

Read full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

Robert Simpson
Deceased Jan. 25, 2025
London, Ont.

The Rev. H. Lane Douglas
Deceased Jan. 9, 2025
Chatham, Ont.

Jean Louise (Hazelwood) Jarvis
Deceased Jan. 8, 2025
Tillsonburg, Ont.

Helen Catherine Young
Deceased Jan. 2, 2025
Toronto, Ont.

The Rev. Leslie Blake Carter
Deceased Dec. 20, 2024
Pointe Claire, Que.

The Rev. Robert F. Flindall
Deceased Nov. 29, 2024
Peterborough, Ont.

Josephine Gwendolyn Sinclair
Deceased Nov. 26, 2024
Cold Lake, Alta.

The Rev. Stephen Yeong-Shy Chen (Fujita Eiroku)
Deceased Nov. 9, 2024
Burlington, Ont.

The Rev. Clair MacLeod
Deceased Nov. 6, 2024
Truro, N.S.

The Rev. Peter Barrow
Deceased Oct. 30, 2024
Oakville, Ont.

The Rev. Robert H. Kerr
Deceased Aug. 3, 2024
Campbell River, B.C.



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JUST WONDERING...



Submit your questions to connection@presbyterian.ca.

I'm being baptized as an adult. What must I do after that to become a member of the congregation?

Answered by the Rev. Don Muir, General Assembly Office

The Sacrament of Baptism is one of the most significant expressions of faith and deeply moving liturgies of worship to take place in Presbyterian congregations. Whether it is an infant who is carefully passed from parent to minister, or an adult who stands with the minister by the baptismal font, there is a sense of holy wonder and joy as the trickling water signifies the start of another new life in Christ.

When an infant is baptized, the church is reminded that before we know anything

about ourselves, we are known and loved by God and received into the household of God. The parents make a profession of their own faith and vow to raise the child in the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ within the home and the fellowship of the church. It is hoped the infant will someday make their own profession of faith.

When an adult is baptized, they respond to questions asked by the minister. Their answers express trust in the gracious mercy of God and a desire to renounce sin, grow as Christians in the church, and engage in God's mission in the world. These questions and answers are the

very same as those asked of people who were baptized when infants and, later in life, are received as professing members of the church. Therefore, when an adult answers these questions at baptism, they become a member of the church as part of the sacrament. Nothing further is required. The person not only becomes a member of the congregation in which they are baptized, but also a member of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This is demonstrated when a member moves from one Presbyterian congregation to another. Their membership is transferred with them and their name is placed, by the

Session, onto the professing membership roll of the new congregation.

Living Faith section 7.6.3 makes this statement on baptism:

By the power of the Holy Spirit God acts through Baptism. It is the sacrament not of what we do but of what God has done for us in Christ. God's grace and our response to it are not tied to the moment of Baptism, but continue and deepen throughout life. It is a sacrament meant for those who profess their faith and for their children. Together we are the family of God.



Remarkable Moments: 150 Years

"Fear not... You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger..." The angel's message first came to troubled people and places, and it continually comes to us again as a reminder that God came into the world in human form in all its frailty, and we cannot remain the same.

Pictured here (left) is the choir at the Presbyterian Church of St. David in Halifax, N.S., at Christmas in 1949 (provided by the Presbyterian Church Archives).

Also pictured (above) are children in Bethlehem, reenacting Christ's birth. The photo was taken by Shaun MacDonald, former Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine-Israel.

See more photos from the past as well as today in the 2025 wall calendar, available at presbyterian.ca/calendar.