



## Helping Hands After the Beirut Blast

*By the Joint Christian Committee  
for Social Service in Lebanon*

Young eyes turned to Elias Habib. The Joint Christian Committee (JCC) Youth Leader looked at about 20 youths standing before him. Shock was written all over their faces. Their hillside mountain Palestinian residences, known as the Dbayeh Camp, shook with the blast that ravaged Beirut's port and its surroundings when a large amount of ammonium nitrate, stored at the port, exploded on Aug. 4, 2020. Over 180 people died, 6,000 were injured, and an estimated 300,000 homes were heavily damaged. Considered one of the most powerful non-nuclear explosions in history, the blast was felt in Turkey, Syria and Cyprus, which is more than 250 km away. In Dbayeh, only 11 km away, buildings shook ferociously as the deafening sound drove people out of their homes in panic. News soon reached them, however, that the explosion took place at the port. In less than an hour, Habib was already calling on his youth group to get ready. "Brooms, gloves, masks," he mentally listed.

"For now," he explained to them as they gathered in the JCC library later that evening, "we will be help-



The Joint Christian Committee youth group in Lebanon.

ing in the cleaning efforts. Until we can help with the repairs, we will be covering their windows with nylon. Be ready when I call you."

Habib paused. As a foreman on

many construction sites and as someone who grew up in the vicious Lebanese 16-year civil war, Habib could forecast what awaited them. But this youth group, aged from 16

to 24, had yet to see such ferocious destruction or, even worse, feel the misery of the injured ones.

Nevertheless, a few days later, the JCC located and settled in a small destroyed restaurant in the Mar Mikhael neighbourhood, just one of several areas in the Ashrafieh region affected by the blast. They cleared out the debris and set up base. They soon joined the hundreds of volunteers who descended on the devastated areas, sweeping glass shards, setting aside torn doors and windows, and scrubbing blood off walls and floors. Since Lebanese government officials were absent in the field, it was up to the volunteers to help the distraught victims and salvage whatever they could from the debris.

It was an overwhelming and emotional task, but aware that his youth group was watching his every move, Habib grabbed a thick bristled broom and matter-of-factly began to

sweep one of the devastated homes. The youths quietly followed suit.

As they made their way into yet another home, hills of glass, cement and wood debris welcomed them—the remnants of a living room. In the corner was what looked like a dining room table hinged on one leg that threatened to collapse any second. The walls, once adorned with photographs and paintings, stood severely chipped and cracked. In the midst stood a woman, in her late 60s or thereabouts. She looked at the JCC group and attempted a small welcoming smile. But the shadow of the smile soon disappeared and was replaced by a forlorn distant look.

Habib approached her gently. "Is there a specific room you would like us to concentrate on?" he asked quietly. The woman nodded and led him to a small room, just off the living room area. "This is my sister's room," she said. Like the rest

*Continued on page 4*



Sylvia Haddad and Rudolph, the son of the Dbayeh camp director.

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

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

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## MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

# Fasting from Communion, Fasting for Love



By the Rev. Amanda Currie,  
Moderator of the General Assembly

I officiated at a celebration of Holy Communion twice during the first week of March 2020—once with the folks at Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., and then with the Life & Mission Agency Committee and staff at church offices. After that, it was seven months before I could stand once again at the Table of the Lord to break bread and offer the cup of blessing to the gathered Christian community.

Yes, we had a few conversations about doing something online, either by live streaming worship or by video conferencing. But it didn't feel right to me. With the live stream option, I thought about people watching later on (as many do every Sunday) and participating in the holy meal at a separate time or on another day. That didn't seem like communion to me. And although a video conference of worship would gather people together virtually at the same time, it would also leave many people out who were not able to connect in that way. In addition, I had a sense that the celebration would be deeply impoverished by the reality that we would not be able to serve one another.

And so we fasted. It wasn't really a fast that we chose, but one imposed upon us by the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. But we fasted nonetheless.

I have to admit that I have never seriously considered taking on the spiritual practice of fasting. I am amazed when I think about Jesus fasting and praying in the wilderness for 40 days before he began his ministry. It reminds me of how uncomfortable, grumpy and complaining I get when a single meal is delayed by a few hours.

This summer, I witnessed another young man fasting and praying for 44 days. Tristen Durocher began walking 635 km from Air Ronge in Northern Saskatchewan to Regina where I

live. A teepee was set up on the lawn in front of the provincial legislature, and Tristen observed a vigil there, fasting and praying for the victims, families and communities of those impacted by suicide—especially Indigenous and young people who are ending their own lives at an alarming rate in Saskatchewan because they have no hope.

Tristen's vigil was political, as he fasted 44 days for the 44 MLAs who voted against a proposal for a robust suicide prevention plan that would be proactive in addressing the root causes of depression and despair among young people in northern communities. But it wasn't a hunger strike intended to put pressure on the politicians. It was a spiritual discipline with the purpose of drawing attention to the terrible suffering and urgent need of young Indigenous people in Saskatchewan.

Although the government wasn't convinced by his witness, taking him to court in an attempt to get him to leave the legislative grounds, many in the broader community had their eyes opened to the concerns he was raising. Folks visited the site, prayed with and for Tristen, and joined in the movement advocating for a better suicide prevention plan. A coalition of faith leaders in Saskatchewan made a Joint Statement on Suicide Prevention, praising Tristen Durocher's efforts and appealing to the government to respond positively. Provincial Court Judge, Justice Graeme Mitchell, upheld Tristen's constitutional right to carry out his peaceful prayer vigil on the land, and called for amendments to the bylaws that would prevent him and others from doing so in the future.

These impacts were certainly less than Tristen would have hoped for, but they were significant. His fasting was not just about personal deprivation or self-imposed suffering. It was an offering of love and a call for justice that people began to hear and heed.

It makes me wonder about what good God was doing through our months of fasting from Holy Communion. Even without our having chosen this fast, might God's Spirit have been working in us as we experienced that spiritual hunger? And what more might God do through our times of enforced fasting once we accept these periods as the reality and attend to what God may do in and through us because of them?

One thing I noticed during the months of lockdown was that I became more aware of the members of our community who are regularly homebound and unable to attend wor-



The Rev. Amanda Currie leading communion.

ship and communion services at the church. Even when we know about them and bring home communion services to them occasionally, some of our members may go many months between opportunities to share the Lord's Supper, and they continue to be completely cut off from the full gatherings of the Christian community. I hope that we can remedy this when most of us return to regular celebrations of the sacraments.

Every time we would have been hosting a communion service, I found myself reflecting on the ways the church is called upon and equipped to become the body of Christ in the world. Although we could not sit together and pass trays of bread between us, I preached often about how we could continue to serve one another and our neighbours in love, offering ourselves and our gifts to sustain the weary ones around us.

And I watched with joy as members of our community enacted that calling. They dropped off groceries for elderly neighbours and phoned, encouraged and visited (when possible) those who were alone. They thought creatively about how to support health care workers, essential service workers and families with extra challenges. They responded to arising pandemic needs in our own community and

around the world, and continued to give generously to the mission and ministry of the church.

By the time we were approaching World Communion Sunday on Oct. 3, 2020, my congregation had begun meeting again in person for worship. The preparations for the sacrament of Holy Communion were detailed and careful, with much consultation with the COVID-19 Provincial Guidelines for Places of Worship and attention to how we could share the meal both safely and meaningfully.

I noticed that among the elders and other leaders who planned with me, the desire to truly serve one another was paramount. Even when it came time for the minister to drink from the cup, the elder who could not pick up the cup (as I had already touched it) gestured toward it warmly, inviting me to take and drink as Jesus had invited me to do.

I also became intensely aware of the spiritual communion that we share with Christians around the world, not only with those who were gathered around the Table that day, but most especially with those who could not gather. While I gave thanks for the communion that we share with many churches around the world, my heart hurt as I thought about the ways in which that communion is broken by

conflict, doctrinal divides, cultural and racial tensions and more.

Since we continued to live stream the service, I prayed for those members of our community who shared with us spiritually, while continuing their fast. As I remembered those watching and praying with us from their homes, from different cities and countries, and those whose hunger was yet to be filled, the words of the prayer took on new depth of meaning:

*Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit unite us with the living Christ and with all who are baptized in his name, that we may be one in ministry in every place. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world.*

I hope that we will continue to be able to celebrate Holy Communion in my congregation regularly from now on, but I believe that the enforced fast from the sacrament did open up some new ways for God's Spirit to work within me and my community. Let us not forget those who continue to be hungry, and let our lives and ministries feed and bless our communities and the world around us.



**MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY**

# And the Word Became Flesh



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

Tradition holds that Jesus was a carpenter. A more logical invention might have been to imagine that Jesus was a farmer. Consider the evidence: Mary once mistook Jesus for a gardener. When Jesus preached, he told more stories about plowing fields, planting seeds and fertilizing or pruning trees than he did about building anything out of them. And according to one gospel, Jesus started life in or near a barn.

This all became more real to me early one morning recently while I mucked out cow stalls and gagged on the foul barn smells. Even the very best-kept animal barn is sullied, smeared and stained. Anyone who spends any time in or near one soon smells of a barn and likely sports tangible evidence of all that happens in one. But it was in these foul circumstances that the Word Made Flesh was born and where he was first fed at his mother's breast and laid to sleep in a food trough.

The gulf between the images on some Christmas cards and the realistic circumstances of Christ's birth is wide. Equally gaping is the

chasm between God's interests and inclinations expressed in the Bible and many of our own. We prefer the spectacular and grand while God opts for the subtle and small. We tend to want things to be simplistic and smooth, while biblical faith presents a complex view of human life with all its thorny issues and in all its roughness. Our preference is for an otherworldly faith, but the faith presented in the Bible is unapologetically fleshy and earthy. Try reading the New Testament sometime with a coloured pencil in hand and underline how often bodies, body parts, bodily functions and flesh are mentioned. Likewise, underline in another colour all the echoes of the Hebrew Bible's emphasis on the goodness of creation in all its wonder and woundedness. It becomes very clear that Christian faith is not a way out of the world, but a committed engagement in the reality of it. Christian faith isn't a rejection of the world but is a hopeful witness to what we know the world can be when the light shining from the stable illuminates all creation.

In the gospel of Luke, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened." And every year we go again with them to see what has

happened. In the little child we find in the barn, God has slipped into the world through the back door of a Bethlehem that is stripped of the glory and holiness we associate with God and want for ourselves. In the stable, God frees us from the distractions of spectacle so that we can see plainly that it is God's true nature to lovingly pour everything from Godself into the Word made Flesh and, in so doing, reconciles and gives new life to all of creation.

Returning to the barn each year, we are reminded of the nature of the one whose ministry we seek to continue. In the stable, we recognize the flawed message of those who preach that we need to escape the world when God desperately wants to break into it. A trip to the barn each Christmas is an opportunity for the church and its communities to reassess the scope and focus of its priorities for ministry. It is a chance for the church to hone in on what God is doing in the world and to adjust its course to ensure that we are following the one who called us to follow him.

Using good barnyard language, someone said to me recently, "2020 has been a really \$#!?+% year—no offence, Reverend." (It's worth thinking about why people feel compelled

to apologize to clergy for speaking the truth plainly.) It's true, 2020 has been a terrifying year in many ways, and there are some things that will be changed forever. Since we made the trip to the barn in Bethlehem last Christmas, we have been diminished in innumerable ways, and some are left feeling frail and vulnerable.

The Word became flesh and was made as vulnerable and frail as each of us, and he lived and died in a very fetid, imperfect and flawed world. There are lessons in this: hope can be found in the most unlikely and dismissed circumstances, there is no perfect time or place for something new and transformative to begin, humble flesh can be a bearer of God's perfect love, and there is light and life in this world—and the seeds of its new creation were sewn at Christmas.

## Notice

In the Fall 2020 issue, the article, "Young People with a World View," on page 35 was written by Chris MacDonald, Clerk of Session, as well as Ann Marie Munro, at First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, N.S.

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

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Thank you to all volunteer contributing writers.  
For submissions, questions and feedback, please email [connection@presbyterian.ca](mailto:connection@presbyterian.ca) or call 1-800-619-7301 ext. 243.

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

*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.*





## FEATURE

# An Overwhelming and Emotional Task

Continued from page 1

of the house, it was in shambles. It seemed to have been a modest room: a small bed by the side of the wall, a nightstand next to it, and a chest of drawers across the room. A small wooden cross was still hanging precariously over the bed. Glass shards and chunks of wood—pieces of the broken wooden shutters—completely covered the bed, dresser and floor.

Habib beckoned to a few of his young workers and turned his attention back to the woman. She had wandered back to the shattered living room area and was staring at a big chunk of cement wall crumbled in a heap on the floor. “We will clean this up for you, too,” he said with forced cheerfulness. “Don’t you worry.”

Habib looked around. As far as he could tell, the woman was unmarried, and judging by a dusty photograph still sitting on the dining room mantel, she and her sister, who also seemed to be single, shared this flat. Probably the original family home.

“Where is your sister?” asked Habib. “Perhaps we could be of assistance to her, too.”

The woman’s eyes, suddenly filled with tears, reverted to the crumbled wall. Habib stared at her incomprehensibly and looked back to the heap. And then he saw it. An armchair of some kind, badly damaged among the debris. The woman looked at Habib and nodded. Her sister was sitting in that chair. She didn’t have a chance.

A subdued JCC group moved on to the next building. And the next. And the next. It was all the same. Shattered glass, wood, aluminum scraps, splintered furniture, crumbled walls...and disturbing stories. It was like living in a Hollywood Armageddon movie, Habib thought. Day after day, the JCC group put up nylon sheets across windows and balcony doors, and hauled down the stairs hundreds of bags filled with debris. Glass shards were carefully placed in bags destined for recycling. In a way, thought Habib to himself, it was a field day for recycling companies. Never had they seen so much glass. No, he thought sombrely, this was no field day. Not for anyone.

Certainly not for the young gym owner with cuts all over his face who sat on what seemed to be part of a stationary bicycle. “Careful,” he called out as the JCC group walked in, “the walls, or whatever is left of them, are about to fall.”



The JCC youth group cleaning debris after the explosion in Beirut.



Habib looked around. It was a small gym. Remnants of weight machines and treadmills were everywhere.

“This was my livelihood,” said the young man. “I earned just enough to feed my mother and sisters.”

“Now what?” he asked no one in particular. He explained that his mother and sisters survived with slight injuries, “but three of my best friends died.”

They usually meet in the gym every day for their workouts. After work. About now, he added.

Once the gym was cleared, the JCC group moved on. More destruction, more heart-wrenching stories. At times, Habib doubted the wisdom of exposing his youth group to such tragedy, to such hardship.

But there was more than that.

They were Palestinians (albeit Christians)—a word which, for years, brought contempt in many Christian circles. Indeed, many massacres and battles were committed by both groups against each other—Christian and Palestinian militias—during the Lebanese civil war. Habib’s father was severely injured during such fighting. Habib himself fled from one area to the next to escape the clashes.

The JCC Palestinians were too young to realize the irony: they were aiding the very people who once upon a time were the enemies of their parents and grandparents.

“You are Palestinians?” said one

older woman, as the group hauled out the debris from her home. “And from the camp?”

Habib nodded slowly. The JCC youngsters looked oblivious to the question. They smiled cheerfully.

The woman looked at the youths.

“The government hasn’t been by to ask about me,” she said. “They didn’t come to clean my home and help me. But you did.”

She paused, then looked at Habib. “Curse the war,” she said. “You are my brother.”

Even in times of crisis and despair, Presbyterians Sharing continues to share God’s hope and love.

In October 2020, an extra grant of \$13,500 was sent to support the JCC.





**FEATURE**

# Fire Turns to Blessings for St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church



Oct. 6, 2020, was a good day for St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church. After almost a year of being on the ground for repairs, the steeple was put back in place.

By Lynne Allan, Elder, St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L.

Advent has begun and Christmas will soon be upon us. It's the season of giving and receiving, and the perfect time for the congregation of St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., to reflect on the past year and count our blessings, for we have many and have received much.

It started with a fire on the night of Oct. 18, 2019. By the time it was out hours later, the sanctuary and some contents were destroyed by fire, smoke and water. The rest of the building and contents were badly damaged.

No one was feeling blessed as we watched smoke rise from the steeple where a hole had been chopped for fire hose access, but looking back, that very night was the beginning. As congregation members and others watched the firefighters do their

job, the minister of the church located next door reached out. "Whatever you need," she said. "A place to worship, a room for a meeting, whatever you need." With our next monthly service just over a week away, we took the Rev. Kim up on her offer.

When the structure of the church was deemed sound, the insurance process began and the adjuster worked with us, offering advice and was only a phone call away when we had questions. Three days after the fire, at the opening worship service of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces annual meeting, it was announced that the offering would be given to St. Matthew's. Meanwhile, the owner of a local construction company had decided he would provide free labour for the church restoration project, augmenting a small group of volunteers. On Oct. 30, the steeple was brought down for repairs and work had begun.

News of the fire, the damage and the restoration spread by word of mouth and through both mainstream



St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., was without its steeple for almost a year. It was removed soon after the fire in October 2019 so that repairs could be made on the ground.

and social media. Offers of space for our services came from two other churches. The Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society offered assistance in dealing with damaged documents and also made a donation. In mid-December, when the church was broken into and tools of one of the volunteers were stolen, a man in Mount Pearl (more than 400 kilometres away) heard about it and offered surplus tools from his construction company, his only connection being that his wife is originally from Grand Falls-Windsor. He also made a financial contribution.

The local theatre has offered to host a movie night with proceeds going to the church. The Parish Pastoral Council of the Roman Catholic Cathedral earmarked St. Matthew's as the recipient of the collection from its 2019 Advent offering envelopes. It turned out to be the most ever contributed by its congregation to its Advent offering. More recently, the Odd Fellows Lodge donated the proceeds of a mooseburger sale.

Some of the support we received we had known about in advance, but others had been a surprise—like the cheque that arrived in the mail from a church in Ontario whose minister served St. Matthew's for two years in the 1980s.

Individuals have also wanted to help. Aimee Doiron, organist at St. Matthew's for the past 20 years, held a Christmas recital of her piano and voice students and they donated the ticket proceeds to the restoration



The Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society is one of the organizations that has provided support for the restoration of St. Matthew's church. Terry Burke, Heritage Society Treasurer, holds a picture of the church from its early days. Lynne Allan, treasurer of St. Matthew's, holds a photo of the church before the fire. St. Matthew's was designated the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor's first municipal heritage building in 2005.

fund. Other donations have come from former members, some of whom maintain a connection through family in the congregation. Still others have a relationship with St. Matthew's through their own churches or simply have a soft spot for the oldest church building in the town. A 100-year-old Corner Brook man was one of those with a soft spot, having attended services at St. Matthew's as a child with his parents on their drives across the island to St. John's to visit relatives.

Support has taken other forms as well. One church invited our women's group, the Thistle Club, to share in fellowship on two occasions. Local newspaper, radio and television reporters have been good to us, sharing our story with the province and beyond, as has the *Presbyterian Connection* and the AMS publication, *The Presbyterian Message*. At the invitation of a committee working to convert a former convent into a hospice, our last two monthly services before the onset of COVID-19 were held in their chapel.

It's no wonder we feel blessed.

Receiving such kindnesses increased our own determination to continue to help others through the community outreach program started by St. Matthew's in 2018. We didn't miss a service between the time of the fire and the March shutdown brought about by COVID-19. The local food bank and Salvation Army benefited from the non-perishables and clothing collected at these services. During this time, we also took an active role in the World Day of Prayer service and the Canadian Bible Society's Festival of Praise.

As work continues on the restoration, other churches have resumed in-church services, following health authority regulations. St. Matthew's must make its decision about resuming services based on what is best for our small and aging congregation. No matter what comes first, completion of the church or resumption of services in another location, we look forward to re-establishing our connection with the community that has supported us.

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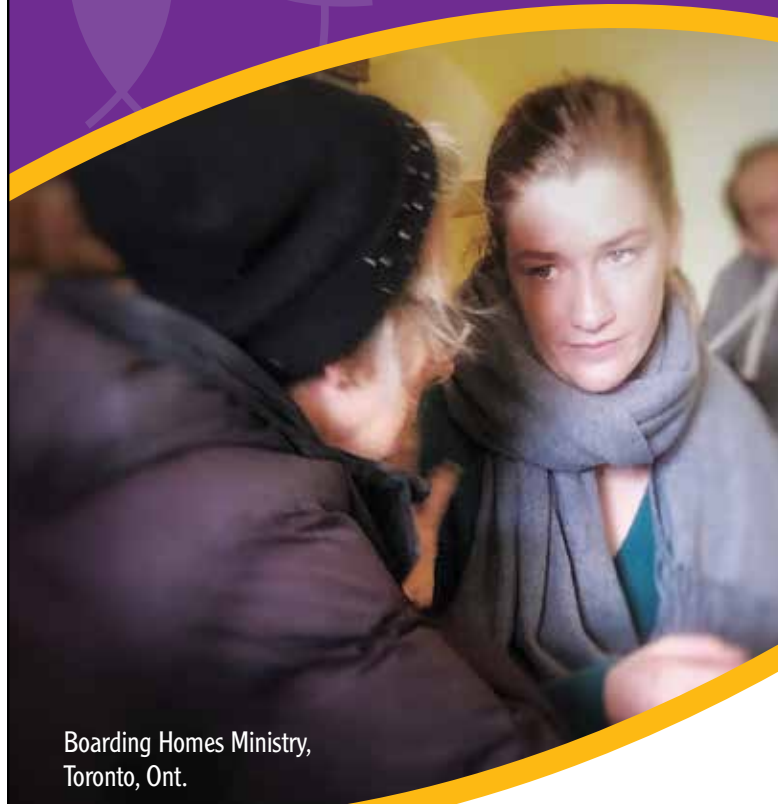
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Through a Time of Adaptation**

Participants of Cyclical PCC, 2019.

*By Karen Plater, Associate Secretary,  
Stewardship & Planned Giving*

Recently, as I was washing dishes, I found myself catching up on videos of the online Cyclical PCC conference that took place earlier this year. A year ago, it wasn't something I might have been doing on a Saturday night. A year ago, participating in a Cyclical conference would have involved travelling, attending sessions in person and sharing experiences over a meal and conversation. But we are adapting.

Cyclical is a network implemented by The Presbyterian Church in Canada—with support from Presbyterians Sharing—to engage and equip leaders in starting new worshipping communities. These communities can take many forms: dinner churches, sports ministries, house churches, café ministries—any kind of gathering centred on Word and Sacrament that calls people to walk closely with Jesus, most often outside a formal church building.

Like a traditional congregation, people in the worshipping community are accountable to one another and to the structures of our denomination as they strive toward sustainability in leadership and finances. The network includes participation from church starters in the United States, so that people in different situations can learn from one another.

As I washed the cutlery, I listened to plenary speakers talk about ways to be church in a post-COVID world. They reflected on building community when you can't physically be together, supporting and equipping emerging leaders, adapting to new streams of income and the need for flexibility while still valuing the communal discernment of the Holy Spirit. These are all issues that congregations and local, national and interna-

tional ministries have been grappling with, as well, since March. The Cyclical network has realized this and, in addition to posting recordings of their conference online, they have opened up participation in their one-day online conferences beyond the members of their network to anyone interested.

This is Presbyterians Sharing: people across Canada—and around the world—learning from one another and building on each other's experiences as we discern where God is at work and how we can work together to be God's hands in this world.

Just as congregations are redefining what worship means when we can't gather in physical spaces, the PCC is exploring how collaboration and discernment can happen when we can only meet remotely.

We don't yet know how General Assembly might gather next year, but people are exploring options, tapping into the experience of partner denominations who met virtually this year, and gathering input from people across Canada. The planners of Canada Youth are trying to determine how to build connections between youth and young adults who are starting to grow weary of meeting and learning online. Committees and staff are looking at the best ways to equip congregations—from digital resources to online events.

International mission staff are learning new ways to support mission partners from afar—something the Rev. Dr. Paul MacLean and the Rev. Joel Sherbino have been doing successfully for a few years now. The Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand will work from Ottawa as he continues to help partners in Malawi develop their theological education programs. He reflects in his blog: "The question becomes whether or not I can be effective if I'm not there. I think so..." Blair will support Zomba Theologi-

cal College's research mandate, find ways that international partners can support scholars and library resources, and help the college launch an e-learning and broader digital strategy. In addition, he will edit a series of 26 workbooks and help create an introductory Bible curriculum focused on Acts and the epistles for the Theological Education by Extension Malawi program. "All of these are easier to do here in Canada where I have reliable Internet and electricity, but will have a direct impact on both of these institutions."

Congregations, ministries and national committees alike are discovering the strengths and weaknesses and possibilities and limitations of various adaptation strategies. Learning so many new things and living in uncertainty can be exhausting. There are still more questions than answers. We don't know what lies ahead or exactly what God is doing or going to do—but we know God continues to move. We know the need for mission and ministry continues.

What hasn't changed is our commitment to one another, discerning together, moving forward together, being community together, sharing God's message together, confronting injustice together and caring for the vulnerable together. That's what Presbyterians Sharing is all about. As we put our gifts into God's hands, God is doing remarkable things.

*Check out Cyclical learnings  
and reflections at  
[presbyterian.ca/cyclicalpcc](https://presbyterian.ca/cyclicalpcc).*

*Read more about Blair Bertrand's  
experiences in Malawi at  
[pccweb.ca/missionblog](https://pccweb.ca/missionblog).*

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## MISSION

# Five Years After the Boy on the Beach

From an article in La Press newspaper, written by Paul Clarke, Executive Director, and Cathy Nguyen and Emily Woods, coordinators of the Sponsorship Program at Action Réfugiés Montréal

Five years ago, a photo was published around the world. The image of Alan Kurdi's body, a small Syrian boy, on a beach, drowned while his family tried to seek safety, spurred a reaction rarely seen. At Action Réfugiés Montréal, a PCC-supported ministry, journalists contacted us, trying to understand the scope of the Syrian refugee crisis and, importantly, how people here in Montreal, Hawkesbury, the Laurentians and elsewhere could lend a hand. We shared our expertise on television, radio and in print. People here in Canada with family members in refugee situations elsewhere also contacted us, trying to find a way to bring their families to Canada. Our phones were overwhelmed with offers to help: furniture, apartments, clothing, meals at home and coffee. Churches and individuals called us, wanting to sponsor Syrian families. Men and women, foundations and corporations sent us financial donations, often unsolicited. This one image quite unexpectedly



In 2019, participants of Cyclical PCC were able to meet in person. In 2020, they adapted by meeting online and opening the conference up to others.

created a cavalcade of generosity and caring.

Since then, over 40,000 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada. They have learned French and/or English. The children are in school. People have found or created jobs. Much has been done, and we are thankful many people are living in safety. But when we talk to some of these folks about this anniversary, it brings tears: reminders of the difficult journey to Canada, the uncertainty they lived, and the numerous relatives lost due to war or while trying to flee. Many here in Canada still have family members living in difficult situations

and hope that they might be reunited somehow.

Much remains to be done. Many Syrians are still in Syria, many are in neighbouring countries. A large cohort lives in Lebanon, a country currently in crisis. Children there are lacking nourishment and education. Parents have lost their jobs and means of supporting their families. Many are afraid, lacking money, food and housing. The *Montreal Gazette* recently reported that the pandemic has increased disparities in Montreal between well-to-do families and newcomers; we know this is also the case for refugee people in far-

away lands. The pandemic caused a temporary immigration halt for over four months, and an extremely harsh, abrupt reduction in the number of arrivals of sponsored refugees this year. People who have already waited years for their files to be processed now are forced to wait even longer, as are those living with extended family separation.

And of course, not only Syrians need protection: organizations like ours have received applications for sponsorship from countries like Burundi, Iraq, Eritrea and Afghanistan, among others. Quebec has greatly reduced the number of sponsorship files accepted. Recently, the allotment for files submitted outside Montreal was not reached. We suggested flexibility to reappportion the quotas to at least offer sponsorship spaces to the number of people originally planned. *Notre gouvernement* refused our suggestion, so even fewer people than planned will arrive. A government that can't seem to acknowledge systemic racism refuses to meet its already miserly low quota for refugee sponsorship. A government that declares thanks to "*les anges gardiens*" offers permanent residence to some, but sees those who

Presbyterians Sharing provides support to Action Réfugiés Montréal as it offers hope to refugees.



do the cleaning or provide security as not angelic enough.

Five years after the photo of Alan Kurdi was published, our attitude is quite well defined: Gratitude, for the effort put forward by all segments of Canadian society to reach out a hand to refugee people seeking solutions; Resolve, to continue to advocate for refugee rights, both for refugee claimants and for shorter wait times for sponsorship files; Confidence, in the willingness of our neighbours—including individuals, faith communities and corporate entities—to continue to support the work of organizations that accompany refugee people upon their arrival in Canada.

Five years ago, a photo of a tragedy inspired so many of us to reach out. We know that compassion and justice for refugee people will continue to provide hope to people here and far away.

## Supporting Employment and Social Connections During COVID-19



Gordon and Geraldine McCauley at the Blue Jays baseball home opener last year. His description: "Me and my best friend, partner, lover, devoted wife of 39 years, mother of my children, fashion consultant and greatest earthly treasure."

By Lacey Kempinski, Raw Carrot Community Engagement staff member

The past six months have presented us all with new challenges and a new understanding of employment as COVID-19 changed the way we work. Many of us were fortunate enough to have adjustments to our employment, some of these changes meant we worked from home, or

ensured we had access to personal protective equipment.

Most of us still interacted with colleagues virtually, had family surrounding us at home, and scheduled phone conversations and online chats with friends.

Others were faced with challenges of maintaining employment, and experienced social isolation as they faced time away from family, friends and colleagues.

One lesson was clear: the value of social connection remains so very important.

Gordon and Geraldine McCauley understand this well. Gordon is the president of Prodigy Graphics in Vaughan, Ont., a Canadian trade-only printing pioneer. With a team of employees and remarkable family beside him, he understands the importance of social connectedness, and the role employment plays in creating bonds.

This is why Gordon and Geraldine chose to make a \$12,000 gift to support the Raw Carrot. The McCauleys' donation is the single largest offering from private citizens that the Raw Car-

rot has received. In a time when challenges are numerous, generosity from the heart is making a big impact, ensuring individuals living with physical, mental and developmental disabilities have access to meaningful employment—and social connectedness.

After reading about the work of the Raw Carrot in Glenbrook Presbyterian's annual report, the McCauleys were inspired to dig deeper and learn more about an organization aiming to provide a hand up to those struggling, in lieu of a hand out.

As strong supporters of frontline missions like Evangel Hall Mission and Square One Open Door, the McCauleys feel called to purposefully search out organizations, like the Raw Carrot, that answer the question posed in James 2:14 ("What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?") and help support them to do the work that God has called them to.

And that is what they have done. Their incredible gift will help provide meaningful employment, and social



Raw Carrot Kitchen Manager, Karen, (left) and staff member Lori chopping veggies for soup.

connectedness, for the almost-30 employees at the Raw Carrot. While navigating a global health pandemic, the social relationships and additional income Raw Carrot staff receive from their employment has never been more important.

Like donations to Presbyterians Sharing and PWS&D, the McCauleys' generosity demonstrates God's amazing love in action. Through sharing the diverse work that our denomination is involved with, we can increase our impact and give to those ministries that resonate within our areas of passion.

As a social enterprise, the Raw Carrot relies on both the sales of their handcrafted gourmet soup and the generosity of their community of donors, including Presbyterians Sharing, to fulfill their mission of providing meaningful employment to

those living with physical, mental and developmental disabilities.

To learn more about the Raw Carrot and how you can get involved (or purchase soup!) please visit [therawcarrot.com](http://therawcarrot.com).

Presbyterians Sharing supports innovative mission programs in Canada that make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people.





## MISSION

# Story of Mission: The Spirit is with Us

By Kate McGee, Executive Director and Chaplain at Boarding Home Ministry in Toronto, Ont.

*Gifts to Presbyterians Sharing help Boarding Homes Ministry reach out to people living in low-rent, inner-city dwellings, where they often struggle with mental illness, addiction and poverty. Through visits and community education, the staff and volunteers are reducing social isolation wrought by stigma.*

A few years ago, I met George, wild-haired and wild-eyed, at the door of his Parkdale boarding house. It was a typical Parkdale moment: I was arriving for a pastoral visit just as the firefighters were on their way out. It had been a false alarm.

We proceeded to the startling turquoise-and-yellow sitting room where George trained a skeptical eye on me and said, "What are you? Some kind of worker?"

"I'm a chaplain," I offered, prepared to explain.

Unexpectedly, George lit right up. "A chaplain? I LOVE chaplains! We had those in prison!"

And so, a great friendship was born.

Over the better part of a year, we got to know George at our weekly visits. He was devastatingly funny, tossing a deadpan comment into a conversation that would make the whole room crack up. He had limitless enthusiasm and childlike glee. He loved to read the Bible with our team member Jim and listen to him play



the banjo. As George came to trust us, we learned how hard his past was and how deeply he'd been hurt by people who were, in his words, "NOT kind and gentle." We never missed a chance to affirm the fact that George stayed so tender-hearted despite the cruelty he had faced.

Over the summer, George looked increasingly unwell and distraught. And before we knew it, he was back in prison.

It took us months to find him, but he was so delighted when we showed up on the video screen one day (new high-tech prisons no longer let visitors see their loved ones through Plexiglas). He asked us about the banjo and proudly told us about his Bible class.

COVID-19 has made things hard for our ministry, as we've been forced to substitute letters and phone calls for those crucial in-person

house visits. We miss the residents a lot. One great cause for celebration, however, comes from the unlikely place: those video screens. One thing we can say for them is that they are certainly germ-free. We get to see George again next week and we can hardly wait.

Working in this ministry is a lesson in finding small joys amid great pain. Sometimes problems are too big for a quick fix. The forces at work are too great, and systemic change takes time. Our little ministry is unlikely to end poverty or cure schizophrenia. But loneliness and isolation make both of those afflictions so much worse. And we can fight those by choosing to connect in the moment we're given. We can feel the Spirit right there with us, delighting in us as we delight in each other.

*Read more Stories of Mission, along with reflections, prayers and discussion questions, at [presbyterian.ca/stories-of-mission](http://presbyterian.ca/stories-of-mission)*

## LEADERSHIP

# A Conversation with Two National Church Committee Conveners

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

Two of the gifted, faithful and insightful leaders serving as conveners of denominational committees are **Sandra Cameron Evans**, convener of the Assembly Council, and **Cindy Stephenson**, convener of the Life and Mission Agency Committee. Coincidentally, both Sandra and Cindy were born in Moose Jaw, Sask., are elders in congregations in Calgary, Alta., and have worshipped in rural and urban congregations across Canada. They both share with the church a wealth of experience and skills they acquired and honed in the corporate sector.

Sandra is a human resources specialist, and Cindy worked in the area of project management with Imperial Oil Limited in cities from coast to coast. Both conveners also have long family histories in the church and parents who were active in congregations. Cindy's grandmother worked at the national office, and generations of Sandra's in-laws have been ministers and academics in the PCC.

In conversation with each other earlier this year, Cindy and Sandra spoke about how essential congregational life is to their spiritual and

devotional life. Cindy finds discipline in the community where prayer is the norm and where the principles that Christ modeled can be lived out in real ways. The Sabbath and its patterns of rest, prayer and renewal are deeply valuable to Sandra, along with appreciating and treasuring time as they are treasured in worshipping communities. Sandra went on to talk about how she has found important mentors and people who were formative in her faith in the congregations she has been part of. Talk of mentors turned the conversation to a discussion about the love and formative influence of the "saints" we all encounter in the church. For Cindy, one of the gifts of being active in the church locally and nationally is the way it becomes a means of connecting to many more saints across the country. General Assembly and committee meetings are for more than business, they are "family reunions" as the saints gather for worship and connection, as well as work.

Reflecting on the cancellation of the 2020 General Assembly, the conveners lamented the loss of fellowship as well as the opportunity to attend to important topics for the church to consider. While recognizing the importance of discerning God's purposes



**Sandra Cameron Evans, Convener of the Assembly Council.**

in the questions about sexuality and gracious dismissal that the church is wrestling with, both see a tendency for the remits about sexuality to become the lens through which all topics in the church are viewed, coupled with the risk that it prevents us from attending sufficiently to other important matters.

Specifically, Sandra mentioned how interested she is in the important question about the role and status of young adult representatives at General Assembly, which is under consideration. And she is excited about seeing the new and prominent place for the National Indigenous Ministry Council in the church formalized. Cindy picked up the conversation and spoke about the important work that is being done to study the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, that will have to wait to be addressed by the Assembly.

In considering their role as conveners of General Assembly committees beyond simply keeping order at meetings, Cindy and Sandra



**Cindy Stephenson, Convener of the Life and Mission Agency Committee.**

were very thoughtful and spoke with care and concern about how they approach their leadership. Sandra strives to ensure that diverse voices around the table get heard, and she intentionally seeks ways to do this effectively and fairly. On the Assembly Council, Sandra is known for beginning all of her prayers at council meetings with the words: "God of community and unity." The continuity of her words reminds members that diverse opinions and perspectives exist within a far greater cohesive unity of faith and the church. Cindy spoke of grace and graciousness as essential components of leadership. She also sees her role on the Life and Mission Agency Committee as helping members see their own mission and how they can make a difference in the church and the world through their service on the committee. Conscious that the church and the world should be better tomorrow as a result of meetings held today, Cindy seeks to lift the eyes of the committee to peer into the future and pay atten-

tion to the decisions it is making and perhaps unintentionally making in its deliberations. To that end, Cindy is leading the Life and Mission Agency through a strategic exercise to see what we are doing, why, where we should be prepared to go and how to invest in resources for a new day.

The experience of the church during and after the time of COVID-19 was very much on the minds of both conveners. Sandra is thinking about how we can focus on strategic plans, visionary leadership and connectional relations in light of what we have experienced and learned during the pandemic. "COVID-19 has forced us to look at how we worship, connect, provide pastoral care. In this time of being separated from each other at choir and Bible study and prayer groups, we have seen how valuable connecting with others is—how do we build on that and be the church?" she contemplated.

Cindy reflected on the opportunities we have for ecumenical cooperation, and how the broader church can leverage our common faith and share what we do together in the world. She is also eager to see what the church can do post-COVID to understand and expand the nature of how we define community. To this, she said, "How will the church reach out to those people who have 'dropped into church' for many different reasons during this time? Being reminded that the church is beyond the building has never been more obvious, and there is big thinking for us all in the church to do."



## LEADERSHIP

# Fostering Community and Connection at Camp



A special pilgrimage organized in partnership between Camp Douglas and St. Andrew's Hall, in support of the camp.

By Theresa McDonald-Lee, Co-Executive Director of Camp Kintail in Goderich, Ont.

When Presbyterians founded camps from coast to coast, they did so hoping that the combination of creation,

community and worship would inspire and instruct children and young adults about the joy of Christian living. From the 1920s to the 1960s, it was assumed that almost every attendee of a camp would be connected to a congregation. Summer

camp and summer schools were a place to further Christian education and develop leadership. While these admirable goals still happen, the first campers and directors would be surprised at the new role that Presbyterian summer camp now plays in the life of the church.

In a world where congregations are growing smaller and Sunday Schools are struggling, Presbyterian camps across the country welcome thousands of children each summer. Some of the children are regular attendees of Presbyterian churches, while others have a loose connection (sometimes going back two or three generations), and many have no connection to the church whatsoever. Camp continues to be a place where children sing grace before meals, open their Bibles, learn to pray, sing songs of faith and live in Christian community. The difference is that for many campers, this is the only place where this happens. A joyful, engaged life of faith is modeled and shared at camp.

When our camps were founded, Canada was still an agrarian society. Today, our campers mostly come from cities and towns. The term, "nature-deficit disorder," has been coined to describe how children are disconnected from the natural world. Camp is now the place where children see the stars for the first time, jump in the waves, paddle a canoe, walk through a forest, see the tides go in and out, experience darkness and watch the sun rise. Removed from the busy world, camp is where children see the mysteries of God up close.

When children once went to camp, they sent postcards and letters to their counsellors and cabin-mates. Campers today are connected to the world through technology. Summer camp is one of the very few places in today's world where children put down their technology for a week at a time. Camp is where children (and adults) are encouraged to engage in face-to-face communication, prob-



A Camp Geddie camper taking part in a virtual scavenger hunt.

lem-solving and community living. There are no beeps or notifications—other than the occasional ringing of the camp bell! Time is felt differently, friendships develop and connection is made. Conversations about faith spring up around the campfire, commitments are made in chapel and lifelong friendships begin.

For many children, these are new and deeply meaningful experiences. When the pandemic is over, Presbyterian summer camp will be needed more than ever. Children will need to run and play with abandon. They will need time off technology and away from screens to engage in the natural world. Parents will need places that they trust. Children will need to find community and connection. We will need to gather as the body of Christ for worship. All of us will need places for refuge and retreat after these difficult months.

While those first Presbyterians who founded and formed our camps may not have been able to imagine our world, they put aside places for recreation and worship that are a gift for us to cherish and celebrate.

### Ways to Support Camping Ministry

Historically, synods and presbyteries have cared for, governed and financially supported camps. While camps are eligible to apply for support for special projects and ventures from a few denominational funds, donations from congregations and contributions from synod and presbytery dues have been a significant source of revenue for camps. Often, camps do not have significant reserve funds and almost none of them could have possibly prepared for the results of having to close most or all of their summer programs as a result of the pandemic restrictions.

Adopting a camp as a ministry project by mission societies, church schools, congregations, guilds and through planned gifts and special offerings are excellent ways to ensure that camps thrive and continue to nurture the faith of young people in the unique and transformational ways they have.

## Camps During COVID-19

Never have PCC camps faced challenges like the ones brought on by COVID-19. By late spring of 2020, it became clear that the camps would not be able to welcome children to sleepaway camp on their grounds.

Refusing to believe that 2020 would be a summer without campfires, afternoon swims in the lake, or early morning Bible study under a pine tree, the camps quickly adapted to shifting conditions. They worked together to come up with creative ideas on how to run programs virtually and how to make program adaptations in light of provincial restrictions. The results were amazing!

Campfire sing-a-longs were hosted on Facebook live, arts and crafts were led through YouTube tutorials, Bible studies were held online, family outdoor challenges were issued on Instagram, even physically distanced, day-long pilgrimages were organized in provinces where regulations permitted small group gatherings.

The camps showed incredible creativity and responsiveness to the pandemic and, thanks to their efforts, many children were able to appreciate some of the best gifts camping ministry has to offer.

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## LEADERSHIP

# Introducing the Westminster Church App

Westminster Presbyterian Church in Barrie, Ont. received a \$1,000 Innovation Grant from the PCC to help fund this initiative. In the summer of 2020, 31 Innovation Grants were provided to PCC ministries to encourage innovation in the areas of discipleship and public witness during the time of COVID-19.



By the Rev. Matthew Ruttan,  
Westminster Presbyterian Church  
in Barrie, Ont.

The prevalence and power of smartphones has transformed how many people live their lives. Almost 90% of Canadians are online and almost all of them use social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

I read about a study of seven thousand 16- to 30-year-olds across the U.K., U.S., Spain, China, Brazil, India and Mexico. Over 50% between the ages of 16 and 23 would “give up their sense of smell rather than sacrifice their social networks” (Reggie Joiner, *Zombies, Football and the Gospel*). I’m not saying that’s healthy; I’m just saying it’s reality!

And it’s not just younger people. According to Statistics Canada, the fastest growing group of users is seniors. They enjoy how they can connect with family and friends through email and Facebook. And more and more people are shopping online as well.

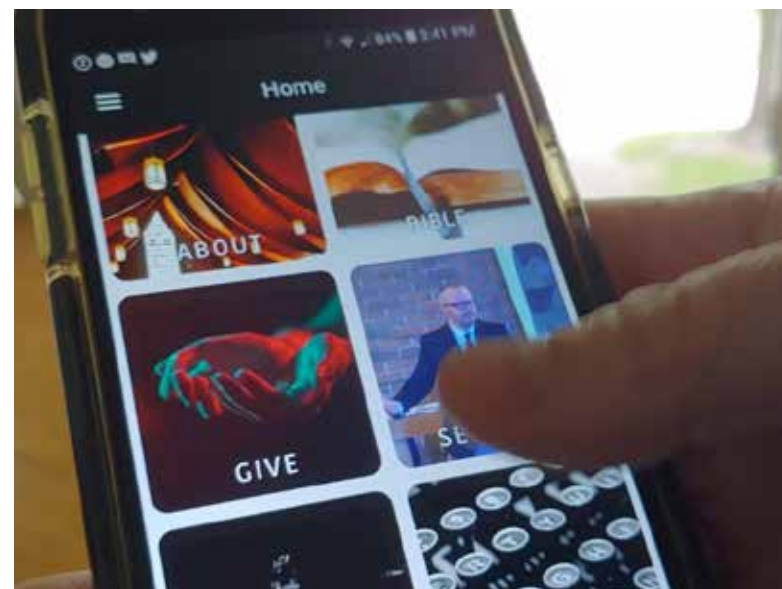
Enter COVID-19. Physical-distancing restrictions, online meetings, online family events, and evolving work and study-from-home scenarios are pushing our time online through the roof.

None of this technology was around in the first century. However, Jesus had a habit of meeting people where they were, whether that be on a hillside or by the lake. He didn’t wait for them to come to him; he went to them. In this same spirit, and because so many people are spending huge chunks of time online, the elders at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Barrie, Ont., decided to get a smartphone app. The decision was accelerated by COVID-19. We wanted to make it as easy as possible for congregants to connect with their church at the touch of a button, especially at a time when so many are experiencing the stress and strain of an uncertain time. Further, since we were already live streaming, and since we were already producing a lot of online content, we knew

we were good candidates for an app because the congregation is already used to new, daily material and resources from the church.

Let’s dig into some details. First, what is an app? An app is a tool on your smartphone. All those little squares (or tiles) are different apps. “App” is short for “application”—as in software application on an electronic device. If you’re wondering about the difference between an app and a website, think of it like this. A website is kind of like your online platform to the world. It probably has a comprehensive program listing and some background about your church. An app is a bit different. Even though anyone can download it, an app is more like a platform for your weekly church family and is designed more specifically for use on a smartphone. It highlights content that is more likely to get used on a weekly basis.

Second, who made it? We researched three different companies and landed on Tithe.ly. You’re right,



the name makes it sound like it’s all about giving, but it’s not. They started as an online giving program but have since expanded to become a full-service app development company. About 80% of their clients are churches. Our app didn’t have a large set-up fee. Instead, we chose from different templates and then went through a process of syncing our information with the app. Some of the content gets updated automatically, and other parts are updated manually through a website. It is an easy-to-use format which makes updates simple and instant.

Third, what does it include? You can:

- access videos directly from our YouTube channel, or anything else we decide to upload;
- go directly to the live stream for our Sunday morning worship services;
- see prayer requests, and even submit a prayer request at the push of a button;
- read up-to-date announcements—which is super helpful when many of us are no longer producing paper bulletins like we used to;
- find pictures;
- access all of our social media feeds in one place;
- watch or listen to sermons;
- fill in weekly “notes” that accompany the sermon to help you engage more deeply with the text and teaching;
- get the latest information on our small-groups program or youth groups;
- find our blog and faith-at-home resources;
- learn more about us and how to be in touch;
- give donations;
- access an online Bible (with multiple versions);
- and find a daily devotional that I

write called *Up!*

The most popular section on the app is clearly the prayer wall, which is so encouraging. At the push of a button, people can find out who needs prayer and instantly lift those concerns up to the Lord.

In addition, when you download the app, you can choose to receive “push notifications.” These are short, timely updates (notifications) on your phone about new resources, live worship services, outreach initiatives, small group or youth initiatives as they become available.

Fourth, how much does it cost? It’s free for users! The app was supported and paid for in part by bequests to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Isn’t that great? Because of this, the app won’t cost Westminster anything in the first year. After that, the estimated cost to the church is just over \$900 annually.

When it comes to smartphone apps, it’s good to be realistic. They’re not the be-all and end-all of online church communications. Some people will use it; some won’t. Some churches may be well-suited to an app, others won’t be. And that’s okay. It is simply one more tool to further the gospel of Christ and the mission of the church—a tool which just so happens to be wired into devices in our pockets, which are an increasing part of our everyday lives.

We’re living in a hyper-connected world. In the 60-Second Marketer, Nicole Hall reported that there are “more people using smartphones than there are people using toothbrushes.” Wowzers. I hope people are still using their toothbrushes! But wouldn’t it be great if they powered up those smartphones to help them learn, pray and grow in the hope of Jesus?

Want to check it out?  
Visit [tithe.ly/app/link/westminster-pc](https://tithe.ly/app/link/westminster-pc).

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## INTERNATIONAL

# Called to Serve and Learn

## A Report from International Ministries

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

*"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2).*

The work of International Ministries has changed over the years.

In 2013, there were 15 mission staff working in 10 countries on four continents. Five years later, in 2018, eight mission staff were in four countries on three continents. Fewer people seek international appointments and shorter terms of service are common.

There are many reasons for the shift, including changes among global partner churches and Christian institutions. What remains clear is a desire from partners to be connected with us in meaningful ways.

It may be tempting to lament these changes. The way we do international mission has shifted dramatically. However, if we are not open to change and new ways of engagement, we risk stifling the Spirit of God.

The global COVID-19 pandemic is causing much sadness and hardship worldwide. Few countries are exempt from its devastation. It is also providing the opportunity to rethink how we respond to God's Call to be engaged in ministry and mission at home and globally. God may be nudging us in new directions...if we are willing to take the risk.

As in the past, mission staff are essential in order to develop and maintain partnerships with our historic churches and newer institutions. Short visits of PCC moderators and national office staff build connections, as we share the joys and struggles of following Jesus. The challenge for us in the PCC is to refine this model while maintaining meaningful engagement with one another.

Some partnerships we have today can be traced back for more than a century. Our history in Taiwan began in 1872, when the Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay began his medical and evangelism work in the north. **Louise Gamble** has served in Taiwan for years and recently the

translation of the reports of the Canadian Presbyterian North Formosa Mission were completed. Together with her colleague Mr. James Chen (James Kuan-chou), the translation describes northern Taiwan's history, and makes it available for Taiwanese to read in their own language with Chinese characters. Louise now lives in Owen Sound, Ont.

The close relationship between the churches in Taiwan and Canada continues today through the work of the McLeans. **The Rev. Dr. Paul and Mary Beth McLean** and their children lived in Taiwan from 1983 to 1995, until Paul was encouraged to pursue doctoral studies in Toronto. In 2004, he was appointed by International Ministries to translate the scriptures into Indigenous languages in Taiwan. Working closely with nine teams of Indigenous pastors and elders, connecting with them by email and online, Paul travels to Taiwan four times a year, except during this time of the pandemic. Living in Canada and working in Taiwan was possible because of his prior experience with the Taiwanese Church and his significant language skills. Paul's relationships with the translators is a joy to witness. Given the serious task of translating the Bible into Indigenous languages, it is inspiring to witness the laughter and mutual respect between Paul and the teams. This innovative model of global mission engagement was made possible thanks to Marjorie Ross, former Associate Secretary of International Ministries.

Taiwan inspired a similar model for Malawi. In March 2020, **the Rev. Dr. Blair and Vivian Bertrand** and their children left Malawi prior to the border closing, returning to Canada five months earlier than scheduled. They have settled near Ottawa. Blair had almost three years of immersion in the Malawi Presbyterian Church, working with women and men seeking to be pastors, youth leaders and Christian educators. Teaching at Zomba Theological College (ZTC) and developing the best theological library in Malawi, Blair has been appointed for a two-year term as mission staff based in Canada. Blair also worked with the lay training program, Theological



The Rev. Dr. Blair and Vivian Bertrand.



Louise Gamble.



Dr. Nick and Becky Bauman.

Education by Extension in Malawi (TEEM), and is developing lay training materials and is editing the Diploma workbook materials. A series of research seminars have been organized at ZTC by Blair, providing an opportunity for scholars to present their rough work and receive valuable feedback. Presentations are online from diverse locations in Africa and beyond. Blair will continue to work with these inspiring partners from his home office in Canada. He will be the "living link," maintaining these important relationships.

Former mission staff often express sadness when leaving friends and work that was meaningful. This was true for **the Rev. Joel and Rebecca Sherbino** who lived in Malawi twice, in 2004–2007 and 2015–2016, and now reside in Paris, Ont. Joel serves as both mission staff with International Ministries and minister of Paris Presbyterian Church. The focus of Joel's work in Malawi is in prison ministry, along with three amazing Malawian volunteers: Lyca, Rammy and Hastings. Each felt the Call of Jesus to do prison work. They visit 10 prisons weekly, half in remote areas, travelling on public transit. They offer Bible studies, individual prayer and encouragement, and help inmates imagine life after prison. Prior to COVID-19, Joel visited Malawi annually in order to gather stories, pray together and support the volunteer team. Joel speaks about this ministry in congregations within Canada, raising funds to assist the volunteers and to buy Bibles and hymn books. This is mission for the 21st century.

Another enlightening experience for International Ministries was the appointment of **Dr. Nick and Becky Bauman** to Nepal. Nick had Presbyterian roots, but they attended a United Church in Orillia, Ont. There are two main criteria for international appointments: that we appoint Presbyterians, and that these people work with Presbyterian global partners. The United Mission to Nepal has been a PCC partner for many years. Could we accept the Baumans' request? We did, and it was God's gift to both the PCC and the people the Baumans encountered at Tansen Mission Hospital and the

New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre (NLPRC). The Baumans were limited to two years outside Canada, for accreditation and his employment in the Orillia Hospital. Two years passed quickly, but the seeds sown in that time will continue to bloom.

After an extraordinary experience in Nepal, it is not surprising that Becky returned with daughter Dot and son Silas in January 2020, to attend the official opening of the NLPRC. Becky and Nick serve as human connections with the people and the mission in Tansen. It takes an intensive experience of working, learning the language and worshipping in a new country and context to make and maintain these deep relationships.

In recent years, International Ministries has appointed three Canadian young adult interns to Malawi and Hungary, each working for 10 months. This possibility offers a chance to explore faith and to engage with global partners. These internships can be challenging for young adults, but all say it was a learning experience with new friendships formed.

Canadian Presbyterians represent International Ministries on international or regional bodies, where their abilities match the needs of the partner. The Rev. Deborah Stanbury was asked to represent us on the Caribbean and North American Council on Mission (CANACOM). The concerns of CANACOM aligned well with Deborah's work with sex trafficking. The Rev. Linda Patton-Cowie is the PCC's representative on the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace, an important group focusing on Indigenous and women's issues, and the international status of Taiwan. These crucial connections increase our knowledge about the challenges our global partners face as we exchange experiences and ideas. Building understanding through dialogue and prayer is essential to developing an authentic and faithful community. Is that not why we say, "the world is so small"?

On Aug. 4, 2020, an explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, killed hundreds and devastated the city. Three months later, hunger and concern for the



The Rev. Dr. Paul McLean.



The Rev. Joel and Rebecca Sherbino and their children.

future are pervasive. The Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut is a PCC partner led by Dr. George Sabra, whose seminary trains 90% of the Reformed pastors in the Middle East. Christians are a minority in this region where Christ was born and taught. NEST was already experiencing financial challenges before the explosion, and International Ministries had launched a special appeal for NEST. Dr. Sabra expressed his gratitude for the financial support with these words: "We are overwhelmed by the support and solidarity that our friends and partners all over the world have shown. The PCC is foremost among them. I cannot adequately express our gratitude and appreciation."

Despite the changes that have required adjustments in the way we work and do mission, the heart of International Ministries remains unchanged. At the core are strong partnerships that connect us to Christ's call to love and to serve.



## INTERNATIONAL

# A Gift of Masks from Taiwan



Louise Gamble and the mayor of Owen Sound, Ont., Ian Boddy.

By Louise Gamble,  
retired mission staff to Taiwan

Protestant missionary work began in northern Taiwan when the Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay arrived from Oxford County, Ont. In 1872, work began in the town of Tamsui with three young men. When the Rev. Dr. Mackay died in 1901, there were 61 congregations as well as schools and a hospital in northern Taiwan. The result was the establishment of the Presby-

terian Church in Taiwan. The Rev. Dr. MacKay was not a medical doctor, but he had some training and promoted a scientific western style of medical treatment. Today, the MacKay Memorial Hospital has auxiliary hospitals and clinics throughout the island, and a well-deserved reputation.

I have lived in Taiwan since 2001, involved in an intense research project about the Canadian Mission in North Taiwan. I lived on the campus of Tamkang Middle School, which was established in 1914 by Canadians. The connection with Canada is symbolized by a Canadian flag on the school emblem.

Taiwan has been extremely successful in controlling the coronavirus. There has been no community spread, and the only active cases are people returning from infected countries. They are quarantined in a government facility for 14 days, ensuring there is no further problem.

Taiwan learned early about the virus, and immediately put into action a public health protocol that was created following the disastrous SARS epidemic (2002–2004), when Taiwan was refused information by the WHO and naively caused a medical crisis.

This year, Taiwan ended its lockdown and by February 24, schools



Students at school with Louise (centre).

were opened with restrictions: constant temperature taking, all students and teachers wore masks, and physical distancing was implemented. Tamkang Middle School set rules that no student was allowed on the sports fields, and basketball was prohibited. There has been no indication of any virus in the school or in the town.

Taiwan's National Health Department restricted the number of masks purchased by each family, available every two weeks. No hoarding was possible, but everyone had enough. The population was compliant with the restrictions, and few businesses had to close. The mass production of masks began. By June 1, all citizens could purchase as many masks as they wished and could send them abroad to family members.

The Taiwan Foreign Affairs Department, with its contacts in Canada, pro-

One hundred years ago, Canadian Presbyterians donated to establish a high school in Taiwan. After WWII, Canadian Presbyterians helped to negotiate properties taken first by the Japanese and then the Nationalist Chinese. In the 1960s, the Women's Missionary Society gave generously to build the beautiful chapel on the Tamkang campus.



vided an enormous donation of safety equipment to be distributed in Oxford County. At the same time, the social department of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, through The Presbyterian Church in Canada, arranged for donations of health equipment, including masks, to be sent to Evangel Hall Mission in Toronto and the Anamiewigumig Fellowship Centre in Kenora.

Meanwhile, a friend in Canada shared news of the stress that caregiv-

ers were working under in senior facilities in Owen Sound, Ont. Teachers listened and began donating masks to be taken to Canada. Others heard about this, and the school principal encouraged all who could to donate to the cause. One class donated over 100 masks. Teachers and students alike joined in the enthusiasm to help. Tamkang students have contributed almost 16,000 masks that were mailed to Owen Sound. On Sept. 2, 2020, the Mayor of Owen Sound, Mr. Ian Boddy, officially accepted this gift of masks for long-term care facilities in Grey County. I was present and spoke of the enthusiasm of the students and teachers as they joined in making this donation possible.

Along with Mayor Boddy, others attending this event included Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker, Chatsworth Deputy Mayor, Brian Gamble, and the Past-President of the Taiwanese Human Rights Association of Canada, Michael Stainton.

Many facilities in the area received the masks, including Country Lane long-term care facility in my hometown of Chatsworth.



Louise along with students at Tamkang School in Taiwan.

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## INTERNATIONAL

# Malawian Women Making History



The Rev. Mwawi Chilongozi.

*By the Rev. Glynis Williams,  
International Ministries*

History was made in the Malawian Church in August 2020: the Rev. Mwawi Chilongozi was the first elected woman as Secretary General of the General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). The General Assembly has five Synods: in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and three in Malawi. The Deputy Secretary General is the Rev. Dr. Gertrude Kapuma—the first female reverend with a PhD. She teaches at Zomba Theological College, a long-standing PCC partner.

The Rev. Chilongozi and her husband, George, an Anglican priest, have three children: a son, age 14, and twins, age 11.

Mwawi Chilongozi is no stran-

ger to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In 1998, she attended the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, as a steward, where she met the Rev. Kenn Stright, a PCC minister. Kenn and Mwawi have been friends ever since.

In 2014, International Ministries was asked by the Rev. Levi Nyondo, the General Secretary of the Synod of Livingstonia, for a leadership development grant for the Rev. Chilongozi to pursue a degree at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. In March 2017, she received a Master of Theology degree. Her thesis focused on maternal health and the role the church can play. The study was in the field of Theology and Development, focusing on the intersection of gender, health and theology.

International Ministries supported Mwawi's attendance at the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) Women's Gathering in 2014. She then visited Nova Scotia, hosted by Kenn Stright. There, she had several opportunities to meet and share with Atlantic Mission Society (AMS) groups.

Mwawi is currently completing a PhD at Stellenbosch University, and her research focuses on microfinance as a tool for socio-economic empowerment for rural women in Northern Malawi.

In Malawi, it is common to fulfil multiple roles and Mwawi has been the Minister of the Zolozolo Congregation in Mzuzu, in addition to her studies and family life. When a 2018 PCC mission trip travelled to northern Malawi, Mwawi and her congregation warmly welcomed the

10 Canadian Presbyterians, offering accommodation, meals and joyful worship. The opportunity to meet people in their homes was a highlight for many.

The offices of the CCAP General Assembly are in the capital city of Lilongwe. In addition to the role of Secretary General, she will be a Minister in a congregation. She plans to submit her PhD thesis in February 2021, the end of a long journey.

Mwawi's prayer is that God will guide her and her colleagues and give them the wisdom to run the affairs of the General Assembly, and above all, that there will be unity among the Synods. We give thanks for the faith and gifts of leadership bestowed upon these women by God, to lead the CCAP General Assembly. We rejoice with them!

# A Place to Call Home in Nepal

*By Becky Bauman, former PCC mission staff in Tansen, Nepal, who remains engaged with the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre. She visited Tansen in January 2020, with her two children.*

Come along, I'd like you to meet my friend. We are travelling across the world to a very small place. You will be able to find the city of Tansen on the map of Nepal, but to reach the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre (NLPRC), you will need to stir up some courage, climb into a jeep, and find a handhold for the bumpy ride. I assure you that it will be worth the journey. There are at least a dozen people living at NLPRC and staff also stay here around the clock. They each have stories that are worth hearing.

Karka is one of the hardest workers at NLPRC and has been living here for many years. In the morning light, he leads the way for other residents into the fields to cut the grass and green leaves to feed the cows. He is the one to help carry the bags of goods and grains from the delivery truck. He is not above complaining about all the work, but he always pitches

in just the same. His hands are also quick to catch the ball, or better yet, to volley it back your way with remarkable skill and great aim. Karka does not take the use of his strong hands for granted, because when he arrived at NLPRC, he was recovering from an infection around both wrists. His family and community were having such difficulty that they had resorted to chaining him in place and this had led to deep wounds. The doctors believed that they might have to amputate his hands, these very hands that contribute so much to the daily life of NLPRC. Karka has had his picture and story shared before, though it is somewhat complicated to get consent for this sharing. He is not a man who has known any kind of power or privilege in his life, in fact, he has been hidden away and treated harshly. He is a man of few words. At NLPRC, however, there is a place for his voice to be heard, and there are gentle hands to reach out and straighten his collar, there are co-workers to bend beside him in the work of the farm.

There is much activity at NLPRC these days as land was flattened, gardens relocated and buildings



Staff of New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre in Nepal.

erected to grow the space and programs available at NLPRC. Karka helps to arrange chairs on bumpy ground for a prayer dedication ceremony to commemorate the progress made and share the celebration with some of the worldwide donor communities. You are invited here to participate, too. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has helped to make this possible. The Atlantic Mission Society was especially inspired by the stories of the residents of NLPRC and they have contributed generously. The focus of this place is to show God's love to the people who have been cast aside. To touch

and care for people with mental illness such that the larger community can see that these people are worthy and they are not to be feared. Sometimes it is hard to know how to be a Christian in the world. You are meeting a group of people who are surely following the way of Christ. Christians in Nepal do not have a very long history as a group, but they are enthusiastic and the inspiration they find in biblical stories is infectious and has led to this kind of humble action. Pray that Karka will continue to find belonging and home at NLPRC, so that his gifts can continue to inspire those he meets.



Karka, a resident of New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre.

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## HISTORY

# Iserdeo Jainarain's Legacy Makes Canada Stronger, More Generous and More Diverse



Iserdeo Jainarain explores London in the early 1960s in between classes at the London School of Economics.

By Randall Germain, Jai's son-in-law; as appeared in the "Lives Lived" section of the Globe and Mail newspaper

**Iserdeo Jainarain:** Educator. Leader. Father. Inspiration. Born Nov. 27, 1928, in Demerara, Guyana; died April 4, 2020, in Victoria, of organ failure; aged 91.

As with many immigrants, Iserdeo Jainarain left Canada a more diverse, more generous and much stronger country.

Born to a large farming family in British Guiana, he used education to build a better life. Always a top student, he became a teacher after finishing school at 16 and began working in a tiny village school supported by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Although he was born a Hindu of the Brahmin caste, he converted to Christianity in order to teach. At his second teaching post in Ogle, he met Edith (Elsie) Rambali, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, and they were married in 1951.

While still teaching, he earned a high-school diploma by correspondence, obtaining one of the highest final grades in the country. Also by correspondence, he studied at the London School of Economics, and graduated with a Second Class degree in economics in 1960, perhaps one of the first in the Caribbean to do so. He was then offered a scholarship and spent a year studying at the LSE in London, while his wife and young children remained in Guyana. Money was tight, and he was thank-

ful for the funds sent by The Presbyterian Church in Canada after hearing of his plight.

Back in Guyana, he worked for the colonial government in the planning department but could not put further studying out of his mind. In 1966, he received a Ford Foundation scholarship for a PhD in development economics at the University of Manitoba. This time he took Elsie and their five children (aged four to 14) to Winnipeg, where the entire family made lifelong friendships. Among the highlights of this period was a 1968 cross-Canada road trip—so memorable for a family from a small Caribbean nation.

In 1970, Jai and his family returned to Guyana, where he taught in the newly formed Department of Economics at the University of Guyana. But his research on the connections between multinational corporations and the development of small Caribbean countries brought him into conflict with the increasingly authoritarian government of Forbes Burnham, and in 1976 he made the difficult decision to leave the country. With his family and little else, they landed at the University of Alberta on a temporary teaching contract. Two years later, he found full-time work at Okanagan College in Kelowna, B.C., where he was based until he retired in 1993. He also began to teach distance education through the Open Learning Institute, pursuing his passion until he was 85. He refused, however, to



Professor Iserdeo Jainarain was a proud Guyanese, and enjoyed listening to Indian music and cooking Guyanese food.

use a computer and may have been the last person in the country to teach university courses entirely by mail and telephone. His colleagues and students loved him for it, and he took great pride in teaching thousands from all walks of life, including prisoners.

He was a proud Guyanese, and enjoyed listening to Indian music and cooking Guyanese food. His children especially loved receiving the rum-soaked black cakes he sent every Christmas. But he also firmly believed in embracing his community. In Kelowna, he and Elsie tended fruit trees and kicked up their heels square dancing all around the valley. They were also fierce badminton competitors, although Elsie had the better of him on the courts. Losing her to cancer more than 30 years ago was the cruellest blow of his life, but he refused to let it derail him from being an inspired father and leader. His children have followed in his footsteps, helping to make Canada a vibrant multicultural and multiracial society. He has 20 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, and they promise to do the same.

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## HISTORY



**The Rev. Samuel Ringgold Ward.** PHOTO CREDIT: WIKIPEDIA

*By the Rev. Peter Bush, former Moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and editor of Presbyterian History*

*Note: The following in no way seeks to minimize the deep challenges raised by Black Lives Matter. Nor does it claim special status for the white individuals identified. The goal is to demonstrate that the present moment (2020) is part of a conversation and struggle that has been going on for a long time.*

The Fugitive Slave Act, adopted by the United States Congress in September 1850, had a galvanizing impact on the anti-slavery activists in Canada. The buying and selling of slaves, “The Slave Trade” had been abolished in Canada and throughout the British empire in 1807, and further all slaves in the British empire were freed by order of the British

# The Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, 1851

Parliament on Aug. 1, 1834. With that, Canada became a safe place for former slaves to go to as they escaped their enslavement in the United States. The Free Church of Scotland Synod of Upper Canada, among other groups, invested in providing former slaves from the United States with opportunities to live and farm in safety in Canada.

The Fugitive Slave Act posed a threat to former slaves in Canada. The act gave Americans the power to pursue, capture and return former slaves to their owners from anywhere the former slaves might be living, including Canada. (The American government claimed the authority to empower its citizens in this way. British authorities—the Canadian government at the time—did not recognize that right.) A number of bounty hunters did cross the border into Canada seeking to capture former slaves.

This threat to the Black community in Canada and the disregard for Canada’s independence from the United States, drew the ire of George Brown, the fiery editor of the *Globe* and an evangelical Presbyterian. For months through the fall of 1850, Brown used his editorials to bring readers’ attention to the wrongs of slavery and the American infringement into Canadian life.

On Feb. 26, 1851, in Toronto City Hall, the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada was born. The Board of 34 was made up of nine clergy, prominent leaders from the Black community (including Wilson Abbott),

reform-minded politicians and businesspeople. There were three Presbyterian clergy, including the Rev. Dr. M. Willis of Knox College (who, at the founding meeting, was elected the Society’s President) and the Rev. Dr. Robert Burns of Knox Church, Toronto. Almost every Presbyterian on the Board, including the lay people, was part of the Knox College–Knox Church connection, including George and Peter Brown.

At its founding meeting the Society laid out its mandate: a) “to aid in the extinction of slavery all over the world, by means...lawful and peaceable, moral and religious,” which included the distribution of literature, sponsoring speaking tours, and lobbying political and society leaders; and, b) “by manifesting sympathy with the houseless and homeless victims of slavery flying to our soil.”

The meeting passed the following resolution:

“Entertaining the feelings of [siblings] and friends to the inhabitants of the neighbouring States, and disclaiming all desire to intermeddle officiously with their internal affairs, we feel we but take the privilege of our common humanity, in asserting that the Slavery enforced under their laws is...the forced servitude in perpetuity of the...unaccused, untried, and

uncondemned...

These laws—grievously aggravated by the Fugitive Slave Bill—are at open variance with the best interests of humanity, as endowed by our Great Creator with the privilege ‘of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’”

The Society believed it had an obligation as fellow human beings and sharers of the North American continent to hold the American people to account. The quotation from the Declaration of Independence was a fascinating twist in the argument against slavery. The Canadians were shrewd and intentional in their goal of making slavery extinct.

In the fall of 1851, the Society became aware that the Black abolitionist, the Rev. Samuel Ringgold Ward, had arrived in Toronto. The Society quickly added him to the Board and hired him for a speaking tour which included opening Society branches in: Grey County, Hamilton, Kingston and Windsor.

The Rev. Dr. Willis as the president of the Society was invited to attend the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society’s Annual meeting May 6, 1851, held in New York City. Willis, welcomed with open arms by the American-led Society, brought greetings to the morning business meet-

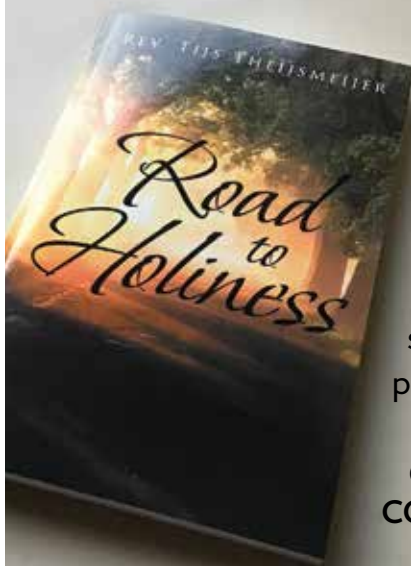


**Wilson Ruffin Abbott.** PHOTO CREDIT: NATIONAL LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES OF CANADA

ing where his words were received “with cheers” from the audience. In the three-hour afternoon session, Willis again brought greetings to the large crowd gathered. Willis spoke between speeches that were given by Henry Ward Beecher and Charles Finney. That Willis shared the same stage with these iconic American preachers indicates the respect with which the Americans regarded the Canadian Anti-Slavery movement and Willis.

This is but one snapshot in the story of the role and place of Canadian Presbyterians in the relationship between Blacks and non-Blacks in Canada and North America.

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## JUSTICE

# Impact of the Israeli Occupation on Children and Families in Palestine and Israel



Laila and Rami, speakers with The Parents Circle – Families Forum.

By Justice Ministries

*The International Affairs Committee (IAC), a Standing Committee of the General Assembly, draws attention to the impact that living under threat of violence has on Palestinian and Israeli families and children in its 2020 interim report online at [presbyterian.ca/gao/ga2020](http://presbyterian.ca/gao/ga2020).*

The disciples of Jesus reacted sternly to the children whose parents brought them to be blessed (Mark 10:13–16). Rebuking his disciples, Jesus embraced these children, saying the kingdom of God belongs to them. God was born as a human child in Bethlehem long ago and then too, families suffered violence, trauma and death (Matthew 2:1–12,

16–18). Today, children and their families continue to live under threat of violence in Palestine and Israel.

The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF) began in 1995 and is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization working with over 600 families seeking positive change in a violent context. All who belong to the Parents Circle have lost an immediate family member in the violence surrounding the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories. The first meeting between bereaved Palestinians and Israeli families took place in 1998 and have continued since. In December 2019 Canadian Presbyterians, including members of the International Affairs Committee (IAC), attended a presentation by two members of the Parents Circle in Jerusalem.

Two speakers shared their stories and their commitment to working for an end to the occupation. Laila is Palestinian and Rami is Israeli.

Laila lost her six-month-old son when the infant was exposed to tear gas by Israeli soldiers. The family was held at a checkpoint for four hours while trying to seek medical care. Her son was admitted to the hospital, but Laila was told she could not stay overnight. That night, her son died alone. The family was not notified. Laila ar-

rived at the hospital the following day and was told that staff could not locate her son's body.

Rami was born and grew up in Jerusalem in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish family whose father had been in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Rami's daughter was killed in September of 1997 when two Palestinian suicide bombers detonated their explosives. She was 14 years old.

Both speakers recounted the sea of anger between the two communities, and how it was destroying them. When her son died, Laila said she hated all Israeli people. But she had a recurrent dream of white doves saying: "Mama, don't cry." Initially, too, Rami's anger made him want to get even, to seek revenge. They both asked, Whose pain is worse? Who is to blame?

Laila and Rami testify to the enduring pain of parents and families who have lost children as a result of the occupation. It is in the reconciliatory acts of ordinary people that we see hopeful lights shining.

Palestinian children living under occupation routinely have their rights violated. Each year, hundreds of Palestinian children are subjected to arrest, incarceration and processed through Israeli military courts, in violation of

the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Military checkpoints complicate and sometimes render impossible the simple task of going to and from school. Since 2004, 987 Palestinian homes have been demolished by the Israeli military in East Jerusalem, leaving 1,704 children homeless. In Gaza, children are denied access to necessities, including water, electricity and health care—97% of water in the Gaza strip is undrinkable. Infrastructure is damaged and hospitals are ill-equipped to treat many of their patients.

The psychological stress of conflict and experiences of trauma have immediate and lifelong impacts. One study on the effect on Palestinians living under Israeli occupation found that 87% of respondents faced psychological stress reporting uncontrollable fear, hopelessness, fatigue, depression, sleeplessness, shaking episodes or enuresis [involuntary urination at night] in children. Children exposed to war trauma report post-traumatic stress and fears, and while the occupation impacts Palestinian and Israeli children in different ways, the violence of the occupation has negative mental health impacts on both groups of children.



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Despite the brutality of the occupation, there are Israeli and Palestinian families who seek reconciliation through such grassroots organizations as the Parents Circle. The Parents Circle has a vision to influence the public and political decision-makers to choose reconciliation and the path of peace over violence and war, in order to achieve a just settlement based on empathy and understanding. As Presbyterian Canadians, we must boldly speak out against injustice, share the stories and experiences of those who face life-threatening impacts of the occupation, and support Israeli and Palestinian organizations that seek to alleviate suffering and trauma.

# The International Decade of People of African Descent

By Allyson Carr, Justice Ministries

In a world where human migration is accelerating—though complicated by our current global pandemic—there is much that brings us together, and striving for togetherness is important. It is precisely that reason, though, that makes it also important to recognize the different experiences that shape our various identities, in order to better understand and support each other in what is, at root, a common struggle for justice.

This need for open discussion and compassion is among the reasons the United Nations created the International Decade of People of African Descent (IDPAD). Through global expansion, people of African descent face many similar experiences and struggles particular to their identity. The United Nations homepage for the Decade, which can be accessed at [un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent](http://un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent), explains, "In proclaiming this Decade, the international community is recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be



promoted and protected." The Decade, which extends from 2015–2024 focuses its work in three areas: recognition, justice and development.

The intention of this focus is to address the areas in which many people of African descent have faced significant prejudice. As an example, a United Nations Working Group of Experts came to Canada toward the beginning of the Decade, in 2016, to see where Canada stood on these issues. It found that Canada has "a strong legal and policy framework to combat racial discrimination and advance substantive equality," which

it praised, but it also found evidence of significant anti-Black discrimination and disparity in the way the legal and policy framework is applied across Canada to "protect" people of African descent. Having first outlined the Canadian framework, it then added that in Canada, "history informs anti-Black racism and racial stereotypes that are so deeply entrenched in institutions, policies and practices, that its institutional and systemic forms are either functionally normalized or rendered invisible..." (To read a downloadable version of the Working Group's full report, go to: [refworld.org](http://refworld.org) and search

for "Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its Mission to Canada.")

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has recently joined with a number of other denominations to ask the Canadian Council of Churches to make anti-racism, and specifically anti-Black racism and the principles of the International Decade of People of African Descent, one of the priorities of its work. The Canadian Council of Churches will be meeting in November to decide how to respond to this request, but in the meantime individual denominations and people can do things on their own to make anti-racism and the principles of the Decade some of our own priorities. How much do we know about the roots of anti-Black racism in Canada? How much do we recognize the vital contributions people of African descent have made to Canada? How hard do we work, as a church and a society, to ensure that people of African descent don't face additional barriers to education, housing, health care and the like, than others in Canada?

Responding to questions like these

is a way to recognize the Decade and its work to end racism in all its forms. Additionally, striving to end racism is an important part of living out Christian faith, as the church confesses in *Living Faith*: "Justice involves protecting the rights of others. It protests against everything that destroys human dignity" (8.4.3). Much has happened across the world and in Canada since the Working Group's trip here in 2016 that has highlighted the importance of the goals of the Decade and the work that must still be done to achieve them. The recognition that systemic racism, including anti-Black racism, is an issue in Canada is growing. We are encouraged to learn more about why the Decade is being marked, what is being done to mark it, and how we can contribute to ensure that the goals of the Decade are met.

To learn more about anti-racism, including anti-Black racism, and the PCC's engagement with initiatives like the International Decade of People of African Descent, visit the PCC's Social Action Hub at [presbyterian.ca/social-action](http://presbyterian.ca/social-action).



**JUSTICE**

# We're All in This Together

## The Problem with Cell Phones

By Allyson Carr, Justice Ministries

"We're all in this together," is an important reminder many of us have heard as the pandemic and its effects have unfolded. Christians are called on to love our neighbour, pursue justice and care for those in need. In our present context, people have had to adapt what "being together" or "in it together" means when we haven't been able to be physically close to care for one another in the ways we were used to—and one of the things that has allowed many of us to stay connected is our cell phones.

Cell phones have become not only a way for us to keep in touch with loved ones during the pandemic through voice or video calls, but they are also now portals to news, websites and even advocacy. Video taken with cell phones and then shared across social media (which is also frequently accessed through cell phones) has shed light on terrible injustices. Cell phones have been used to document brutality, rights abuses and the protests that seek to change them. In a very real sense, it would be difficult to imagine the current social push for a more just world without the tools cell phones have become.

But without decrying any of this, and acknowledging that they provide much good and connection in our current social context, it is important to recognize that there are often also a significant number of rights abuses associated with their manufacturing and with obtaining the metals necessary to build the batteries that run them. As pressure has risen for more and more people to have access to these information and connection portals—an average cell phone—so too has pressure risen to produce them quickly and cheaply. The drive for quick and cheap has often meant that concerns about fair wages, good working conditions and damage to the environment is often overlooked.



Mining for resources in Zambia.

There are many places in the supply chain where exploitation, especially of vulnerable people such as children, can take root. And there's not nearly enough space to cover them in this article. It is worth highlighting one particular form here, then, knowing that there are problems up and down the supply chain. Recently, there has been a court case filed on behalf of children forced into mining labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where more than half of the world's cobalt (used in cell phone batteries) is extracted. The case (described by *The Guardian* here: [theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/16/](https://theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/16/)

apple-and-google-named-in-us-lawsuit-over-congolese-child-cobalt-mining-deaths) was filed in December of 2019 and amended in June of 2020, as more details of the terrible working conditions the children were under became available. This is not a new revelation, however; as early as 2016, Amnesty International published an exposé on child labour mining cobalt for cell phones in the DRC titled "Is My Phone Powered by Child Labour?"

The 2018 General Assembly recognized that forced labour is a travesty that must end, and it approved sending a letter to the federal Minister of Employment and Social

Development Canada affirming the government's commitment to ratify the "Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930." The General Assembly also encouraged individual members to write their MPs. Such actions are important, but so is addressing the issue at a pocketbook level and corporately. We can advocate for companies to stop using child labour at any point in their supply chain, contacting companies individually and putting pressure on them that way; we can refuse to buy products that have known child labour or forced labour in their supply chain, and we can support legal organizations that

raise challenges to such practices in the courts. We can commit to being more careful about how much tech we buy, and demand that we pay the real, full price that it costs to produce—including labour.

There are many ways to pursue justice, as Christians are called to do. As you use your cell phone, consider all the hands that have held it, worked on it, mined the metals and materials that comprise it. Consider the earth whose materials are used. And in so doing, let us seek more—and more concrete—ways that we can truly be "all in it together," supporting each other as God has called us to do.

*Presbyterians  
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Join us for the Advent 2020 Book Study on  
Amy-Jill Levine's *Light of the World:  
A Beginner's Guide to Advent*

The free four-part study guide is now available to download at  
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## RECONCILIATION

# Heart Garden Reflection



By Maggie Donnelly, grade nine student, Guildwood Community Presbyterian Church in Scarborough, Ont.

I'm sure that many of you know the name Chanie Wenjack. He was an Anishinaabe boy who lived in Ontario and attended Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School, which was run by the PCC. In 1966, when he was 12 years old, he ran away from the residential school, a school that all of the Indigenous children in the area had to attend. A week after his escape, he died of hunger and exposure to the weather.

Of all Canadian residential school victims, Chanie's story may be the most widely known, thanks in part to Tragically Hip frontman, Gord Downie, releasing *The Secret Path*, a multimedia project that includes an

album, graphic novel and animated film based on Chanie's story.

But even Chanie's story is not remembered fully. On the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation website, his name is not written as Chanie. It is written as Charles, because the school that he attended changed his name on their official records.

A name can be a powerful thing. Often, it is a part of a person's identity, and it is one of the first ways that other people recognize us. But there are many children who are not remembered by their name or their story. It was for the purpose of honouring those children, and all of the children who attended residential schools, that the first Heart Garden was created.

In June of 2015, the first Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams event

took place at Rideau Hall. Thousands of people participated in this event by designing paper hearts, each heart representing one child who was lost to the residential school system. When the organizers of that event started it, they hoped that the seeds they had planted would spread all across the country. And now, one of them has taken root right here in our community.

This summer was an unusual one. Because of the safety protocols put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it was difficult (particularly for students) to find meaningful projects to work on and ways to get volunteer hours. I was having many of these difficulties, so I asked our interim moderator, the Rev. Helen Smith, if there were any projects that I could work on here at Guildwood Presbyterian Church in Scarborough,



Ont. In her reply, Helen sent me a link to a website about the Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams event and suggested that I could start a Heart Garden. I thought the idea was wonderful, but didn't know anything about gardening, so we asked a few members of the community if they wanted to be a part of this project.

Since then, many people have found ways to support and help the garden thrive. Sandra Robertson and Kay Galbraith helped choose a spot and clear out the weeds so the garden would have room to grow. Cindy Similas and I prepared the soil and selected the plants that would grow together. Cindy also gave the project some of the plants from her garden; Bee Balm, a plant with beautiful red flowers that are helpful to pollinators, and Bleeding Hearts. Cathy Mines from Reach Yoga helped us acquire white sage and tobacco, which are both sacred to Indigenous people across Canada. Steve Lynette made two signs so the people passing by the garden will understand why the garden is there and what it represents. Grace Wuthridge donated money to cover the cost of resources and supplies we needed. Iain Donnelly and Laura Alary helped me find the names and some of the stories of the children this garden is honouring and remembering. And together, Miriam Donnelly and I painted the stones that took place of the paper hearts in the original event. Each background is unique, just like each child was unique. Our hope is that in time, every person who died in a residential school will have a memory stone in the garden to honour them. But that may still be a long way off. We have managed to find the names of almost 180 children who died in schools run by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. But that number does not come close to representing all of the lives that were lost. There is still a lot of work to be done.

As I was painting the names of these children onto the rocks, I saw the names of two people that jumped out at me. They went to the same

school. They had the same last name. And they died within five years of each other. I found myself wondering about them. Were they siblings? If so, did they get along with each other? Did they have other siblings? Brothers and sisters who cared about them? Who remembers them? It was only then that I fully realized: We are not just remembering numbers of people on a list. We aren't just remembering a name on a rock, either. We are remembering real people—actual individuals who had real families and real lives, although many of those lives were ruined or cut short. And we have to remember that.

So, as you pass by a Heart Garden, think about that. Remember that the racism that underscored the In-

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and reconciliation  
initiatives of the PCC.



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## Engaging the Themes Within the National Inquiry's Report

### Why Work To Decolonize?

An Interim Study Guide Engaging the National Inquiry's Final Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Produced for The Presbyterian Church in Canada in collaboration between the National Indigenous Ministries Council and The Life and Mission Agency (Justice Ministries)



The final report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls found that genocide has been—and continues to be—committed against Indigenous people in Canada. A new study resource, *Why Work to Decolonize?*, produced in collaboration between the PCC's National Indigenous Ministries Council and the Life and Mission Agency (Justice Ministries), engages the overall themes of that final report. It aims to help people understand those themes and learn what can be done, both by individual Christians and in wider society, to pursue justice and reconciliation going forward. We hope it can be used as an orienting resource and catalyst to read and work through the National Inquiry's final report itself.

Download the full report at [presbyterian.ca/de-colonize](https://presbyterian.ca/de-colonize).

dian Residential School system still impacts Indigenous children and youth today, and can be seen in the excruciatingly high numbers of youth suicide, the disproportionate number of children removed from their families and communities by child welfare agencies, and the chronic underfunding of health, infrastructure and social services, including schools, in Indigenous communities. And as you remember, be stirred to action. Read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice. Learn how Indigenous youth are seeking justice for their peoples and seek ways to walk with them in a good way.

Remember that it is not too late to make a difference.



## COMMITTEES



By Betty Kupeian, General Manager,  
Presbyterian Church Building  
Corporation

# The Presbyterian Church Building Corporation

work. PCBC was founded in 1968, from the amalgamation of these Synod corporations. As a result of an overture in 1964 from Alberta, the General Assembly decided to form one national body to consistently continue the work across the country, and in conjunction with our affiliated corporation in British Columbia (The Presbyterian Extension Fund), we have been doing this ever since.

### What are some examples of how PCBC can help congregations?

PCBC helps with numerous types of loans, including construction of new worship centres, more recently in P.E.I. and Abbotsford; large church renovation projects such as the one currently in progress in Oakville, Ont.; renovation, repair and restoration of our older buildings; assistance with accessibility projects; and, on an exceptional basis, refinancing of existing obligations which were undertaken for one of the purposes just noted.

Loans are available to congregations of the PCC as well as related entities of the church such as Camps and Theological Colleges.

### What is the relationship of PCBC to the Lending Fund?

We are responsible for the assessment of loans for the church, available through the PCC Lending Fund.

Lending Fund loans are up to \$100,000 and are for a 15-year term. They have the major advantage of being interest-free for the first six years of their term and potentially up to 12 years.

PCBC loans are also for a 15-year term, to a maximum of \$1,000,000. Loans are granted by Royal Bank and secured by a guarantee from PCBC. Congregations are required to pay a floating rate of interest based on the bank's prime rate.

It is possible to obtain loans under both programs at the same time to increase the amount available or reduce interest payable.

### Are there other ways PCBC can help?

About 37 years ago, the General Assembly asked the PCBC to assist the national church with the needs of a number of retired servants of the church. Since that time, we have acquired a number of houses and apartments across the country and

rented them out at reasonable rates. Additionally, we provide subsidies to a number of others to assist them with their financial requirements. At present, PCBC owns two homes and provides subsidies to seven.

### Is there anything else you can tell me about PCBC?

In our interactions with the congregations and entities of the church, we have found that there is often a very positive outlook for the future of congregations. This is evidenced by a willingness to take on debt to allow for the improvement of their facilities and to construct new ones or to add additional space. We have found proposals we received to be generally very constructive and achievable.

### What about buildings in a time of a global pandemic?

Currently, physical distancing measures, mandated by local health authorities, have necessitated the limited use of all public spaces. This includes church buildings. At the same time congregations continue to maintain and improve their buildings, evidenced by a variety of creative proposals.

Moreover, while we live in the pre-

sent, we also plan for the future. During a radically destabilizing time in the history of ancient Israel, when the land was about to be overrun and the people exiled from it, the Word of the Lord comes to the prophet Jeremiah: "Fields shall be bought for money, and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah... for I will restore their fortunes, says the Lord" (Jer. 32:44). This Word from the Lord could only be taken on faith.

PCBC began with acts of faithful stewardship and, since 1968, it has approved 241 loan facilities, totalling more than \$57 million. Sacred spaces have remained vital for human communities as places of worship, places enabling us to take time and look within and beyond ourselves in supplication and gratitude. I believe this will continue as we creatively strategize for a post-pandemic time.

At the same time, I am excited to strategize and plan with the corporation, and with visionaries across our denomination, for what God would have us do not only with our sacred spaces, but with creative ministries into the next generation.

# Crieff Hills Retreat Centre and COVID-19

Submitted by Stephanie Banks,  
Crieff Hills Retreat Centre

Like so many churches, businesses and community groups, Crieff Hills Retreat Centre in Puslinch, Ont., has been dramatically affected by the pandemic. As The Presbyterian Church in Canada's only retreat centre, Crieff offers hospitality to congregations, national committees, ministers and church leaders. When the COVID-19 crisis began, Crieff was forced to close all programs and accommodations. Although open to individuals and very small groups as of July, the centre faces long-term disruption with bookings down more than 80%. "When the

province told us to close our doors, we were devastated. Welcoming people is at the core of what we do," said the director, the Rev. Kristine O'Brien.

During the month of October, the centre will take to social media and will be writing to presbyteries across the country, asking for help to sustain them until 2021. They hope to find support from those who have fond memories of time spent there and those who value the legacy of Presbyterian Col. John Bain Maclean. Maclean was born in the village of Crieff in 1862 while his father was the minister at Knox Presbyterian Church in the community of Crieff. He went on to found Maclean Hunter



Enjoying a meal at Crieff Hills.

Publishing in Toronto, including the *Financial Post*, *Maclean's* magazine and *Chatelaine* magazine. He bought three adjoining farms and kept them as a vacation property until his death in 1950, when he willed them to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. They have been used as a retreat facility since 1975.

The staff at Crieff works hard to be good stewards of the historic

land and buildings entrusted to them years ago, but keeping several historic homes and a barn in good repair requires constant upkeep and significant fixed costs. The centre is governed by the Maclean Estate Committee, made up of members appointed by the annual General Assembly, but it receives no funding from the denomination.

"For forty-five years Crieff Hills has

been a place of sanctuary," said Kristine. "Our mission is to offer beautiful space and nourishing food for those seeking rest and renewal. And in these tumultuous times we know that our ministry is more important than ever."

Those wanting to contribute can visit [crieffhills.com/donate](http://crieffhills.com/donate). Tax receipts are offered for donations over \$20.



## THEOLOGY

# Reflecting on Spirituality

The Presbyterian Connection received a number of responses to the Rev. John Congram's two articles about John Vanier (see Issue 14, Summer 2020, p. 7 and Issue 11, Fall 2019, p. 4). Below is part of a response offered to the Rev. Congram by the Rev. George Tatrie, retired chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

The place of the Holy Spirit in our worship and in the life of our denomination, in my experience, has not had much acknowledgement. Apart from Pentecost Sunday and a few references throughout the year, the Spirit has not been a focus or major concern for us as a faith community. This is different from the life of the early church, where discussion about the nature and place of the Holy Spirit was, for centuries, ongoing. Uncertainty about the nature and place of the Spirit in the divine economy, concerns about the unity of one God and tritheism—lack of understanding about how three aspects of one God could be anything other than three persons, and so on—were never completely resolved.

Subsequently, it was at least tacitly understood or accepted that because of the mystery of who God is and how God is present in the world at large and in each individual personally, there could be acknowledgement of God in the person of the Holy Spirit, with different understandings of what that means and with a plurality of emphasis. Suffice it to say that the church could affirm belief in the ongoing work and presence of the Holy Spirit while allowing for the variety of expressions this belief takes. Thus, the Apostle's Creed, which we ourselves regularly confess as a statement of faith.

As Hendrikus Berkhof points out in *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, the Creed testifies to the church's understanding that the Spirit gives and controls what follows from the Spirit; namely the church, community and forgiveness. These are understood as the fruits of the Spirit. The statement reflects the seriousness with which the church took the reality of God's Spirit and the significance of the Spirit's presence and work. And so it is today, wherever the third clause of the Creed is affirmed in faith.

So, your question is pertinent.

Why, in the life of our denomination, does the person, work and significance of the Holy Spirit seem to be downplayed, if not ignored, chapter 4, *Living Faith*, notwithstanding? I offer two thoughts.

I once attended a worship service in the Knox College chapel in Toronto at which the Rev. Dr. Charles Hay was preaching. His theme was social justice. He commented that he always appreciated and admired his United Church friends because, he said, when they encounter a justice issue, "they pick up the ball and run with it," while we Presbyterians usually hang back to see what develops before committing ourselves to a formal position or course of action. And thus, after much study, debate, overtures and referrals, etc., said Charles, the United Church approach was very commendable and worthy of emulation. But he asked, "What if you pick up the ball and run the wrong way?"

The fear of "running the wrong way" with whatever the ball represents at a given time has been a characteristic of our denomination. We saw that reflected in 1925. And since the presence of the Spirit is intangible, though real, and since the work of the Spirit is always ambiguous and subject to misinterpretation, misuse or even abuse, we have been reluctant to open ourselves to the possibility of error and misunderstanding and subsequent courses of action that could prove destructive and to be a "mishandling" of the things of God and the mystery of God. Hence, we adopt the traditional stance of the church catholic, accepting the presence and work of the Spirit both in our corporate and individual life but focusing on the reality and concreteness of Jesus the Christ who is truth and life and through whom comes our salvation and that of the world.

A second observation. What we do not understand or fear we tend to attempt to control. Decency and order was, in my view, a legitimate response to what Paul viewed as indecent and disorderly in the church and thus destructive of its life and offensive to its God and Lord (1 Cor. 14:40). One curtails disorder through the imposition of a discipline. While necessary and healthy in some respects, this discipline, established by the powers that be, tends to become codified and in turn to become a rigid

dead weight, guarded by these same powers and their successors.

So, the challenge to every generation of the church, especially of the Reformed stripe: how to live out the imperative of our motto, "The church reformed but always to be reformed." To attempt to live out this motto is to move from statements of intellectual assent, which can be required and thus controlled, to acts of commitment, which require trust and thus faith. And acts arising from such commitment cannot be easily controlled. This, I think, is an implication of your question. In our attempt to keep and preserve what we have (the form in which we have received the gospel and in which we have been nurtured by it)—the tangible good stew cooked by Isaac—do we sacrifice the gospel itself, which is our birthright or inheritance? Do we exchange faith which involves commitment, trust, openness to and involvement in the mysterious, unknown and unpredictable for belief in doctrinal statements which can be more easily controlled and "managed"? This is a question which the church in every generation is called to confront. And in doing so, we would be wise to be mindful of Robert McAfee Brown's assertion in his *The Spirit of Protestantism*. "Believing the doctrine (the stew) almost inevitably becomes a substitute for committing one's life to the God (our inheritance) whom the doctrine is trying to describe. Doctrinal statements are not themselves the truth. They are merely attempts to point to the one who said I am...the Truth... God does not give us doctrines. He gives us Himself in Jesus Christ, and the doctrines are no more than our way of attempting to think through what that gift means."

I perceive a second major concern of yours to be how we might help people or support people in their

attempts "to communicate with the source of life" whose presence is revealed by the spiritual yearnings or stirring to which I have alluded. I have no definitive answer but would tentatively suggest two approaches to it.

First, we take seriously Paul's injunction, "do not quench the Spirit" or "do not put out the Spirit's fire." That is, do not dampen, hinder or thwart (all possible translations of the Greek word) the Spirit's work, movement or power. This, it seems to me, is an ongoing danger arising out of our, at times, legitimate need to exercise control. For we perhaps unconsciously fear that by inviting the Spirit to come among us and be among us we are inviting what we would regard as disorderly chaos. For we know the truth of Jesus' words: the Spirit, like the wind, blows where it pleases and you can't control either from where it's coming or to where it's going (John 3:18). It is threatening to invite the Spirit to work unfettered and uncontrolled because that might put at risk everything we have constructed. And then what? We don't know. And we have seen enough in the history of the church to be cautious about unbridled religious enthusiasm and its destructive consequences.

Control, or the illusion of control, can give a sense of security and does provide a hedge against the anarchy of unbridled religious enthusiasm. Yet, if we are really serious about helping people "communicate with the source of life," do we have an alternative to taking legitimate risks by being open to the leading of the Spirit in ways we have not been? For it is the Spirit who gives life (2 Cor. 3:6). And attempting to control the way or in what form the Spirit comes to people can be, however unintended, a hindering or thwarting of the Spirit's presence or working. And not only in people outside the formal commu-

nity of faith. For we ourselves, in an overly strict adherence to "the letter of the law," cut ourselves off from this same source of life and in our deprivation become deadened.

Again, in his book, Hendrikus Berkhof questions the Pentecostal presentation of the work of the Spirit. Yet, he says, the non-Pentecostal churches have to hear in the Pentecostal movement God summoning us, not to quench the Spirit and earnestly to desire the spiritual gifts, gifts the practice of which is controlled by love, as distinct from doctrine or the law (1 Cor. 12–13). He goes on to state,

"The Pentecostal movement is God's judgment upon a church which lost its inner growth and its outward extension, its character as a vertical as well as a horizontal movement. We have to rediscover the meaning of the variety of the spiritual gifts" (p. 93).

To begin to understand what this might mean for each of us and for the church, our denomination, its ministry, its polity, its self-understanding and its stance in the world would require much reflection, discussion and prayer. Is this something to which we are being called?

A second thought is to seriously explore the significance of your comment about being good. What does it mean to be good? Did the Good Samaritan stop because he was good or was he good because he stopped? What is the meaning of Jesus' assertion that no one is good but God, not even himself? (An assertion found in each of the Synoptics.) What constitutes goodness?

One way to come at that question is to reflect on Alan Kreider's commentary on Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, (pp. 248–258) in his *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. Cyprian, he states, insisted that the church must





## THEOLOGY

Continued from page 20

embody the gospel by following Christ by walking where he walked and as he walked (1 John 2:6). For me, this is one meaning of Paul's injunction to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." And where he walked and how he walked is set out in the gospels. Jesus "walked the talk" and encouraged his listeners to do likewise (Matt. 7:24ff, Luke 6:47, 11:28 etc., James 1:22). Kreider terms the attempt to embody the gospel as "holism." Reflecting Cyprian's thought, he says, "Christians and their communities must live a life of integrity with no discrepancy between words and deeds." Outsiders judge Christians not so much by what they say as by what they are and what they do.

It seems to me this attempt to practice holism is an attempt to be good. (And if this is not enough of a challenge for a lifetime, I don't know what is. For it is a challenge which

eral, progressive/regressive, socialist/capitalist, etc. But, in our secular age, they do not ask where these values come from nor do they ask why one should adhere to one set of values and not another. Why act to save life rather than destroy it, or the reverse? Why is education an important value for some but not necessarily for others? Why act in one way and not another? Why are the values reflected in the Sermon on the Mount significant? Irrelevant?

Back in "the day," raising such questions, acting out of a particular value structure and encouraging people to reflect on their own situation in life and how they want to live and why was known as pre-evangelism: an exercise in working the soil and planting seeds. With what results? Who knows? But through our embodied witness and engaging people where they are and in a language to

*"Control, or the illusion of control, can give a sense of security and does provide a hedge against the anarchy of unbridled religious enthusiasm. Yet, if we are really serious about helping people 'communicate with the source of life,' do we have an alternative to taking legitimate risks by being open to the leading of the Spirit in ways we have not been? For it is the Spirit who gives life (2 Cor. 3:6). And attempting to control the way or in what form the Spirit comes to people can be, however unintended, a hindering or thwarting of the Spirit's presence or working."*

we all, internally and externally, fail to meet. In this sense, Jesus' words about none being good, ring true.) In practical terms, however, the attempt to be good, to walk the way of Jesus means, among other things, to focus on what Kreider terms "the well spring of Jesus' ethical teaching," the Sermon on the Mount, which, he says, motivated Cyprian's expression of what it meant to be a Christian.

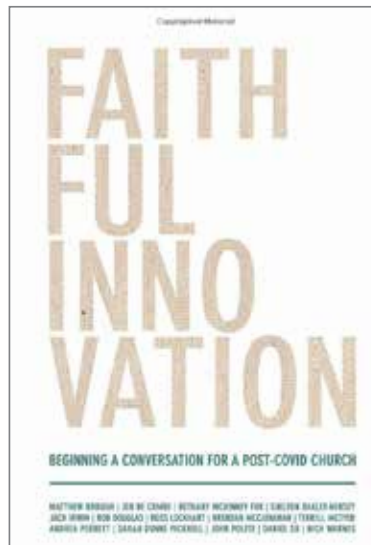
This might not mean much in today's world, or at least in our society. But by focusing on deeds which reflect values, there is a connection to those who were raised in a society where values constitute a common language, even if the values differ. Society in general and the media in particular tend to view values in terms of polarities: conservative/lib-

which they can relate, we might be able to affect people's lives and to extend the invitation to intentionally enter God's kingdom of life through the person of the kingdom's Lord, Jesus the Christ.

Can we look for numbers from such a "seed dropping" operation? We can, but we might be disappointed (Matt. 13:3). So, we are back to your comments about the Spirit. Paul said that in his witness to the Corinthians, he planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth (1 Cor. 3:7). God alone, through the presence and power of God's Spirit, gives life and growth. And this we do not control. It is for us, in any way we can, to "simply" plant and water, and leave the issue with God who, in all matters, is sovereign.

## PRESBYTERIAN WRITERS

### A Review of *Faithful Innovation*



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

*Faithful Innovation: Beginning a Conversation for a Post-COVID Church*  
Edited by Brendan McClenahan  
and Nick Warnes  
Cyclical Publishing, 2020

Early in June of this year, I was asked to participate in an online conversation with multi-faith religious leaders about how our houses of worship were affected by COVID-19 and how we might safely reopen to serve our communities. The call was initiated by our local MPP and was moderated by the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce.

Father Joshua Roldan of Holy Martyrs of Japan Roman Catholic Church proposed that houses of worship be permitted to reopen at 30% of capacity. A few days later, the premier announced that churches, mosques, synagogues could open with that reduced capacity as long as the faithful wore masks and practiced social distancing.

About the same time, the Rev. Dr. Ross A. Lockhart, the Dean of St. Andrew's Hall at the University of British Columbia, posted on social media about a book that addresses the issue of how the church might respond post-COVID. I ordered the edited volume that had been hurriedly published, and was impressed to see that five of the eleven chapters were

written by people associated with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is a book "for leaders in the Church who have led, who continue to lead, and who will continue to lead."

The first chapter, and perhaps the finest, is by Ross Lockhart. It provides a primer on ecclesiology—the doctrine of the church. He reminds us that the church is (not) the building. The church, borrowing the infamous phrase of our Prime Minister, needs to follow the example of Jesus and "speak moistly." No, the church should not spread the virus, but it should incarnate the gospel in new and fresh ways. In this we should heed what the gospel writer John records: "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'" (John 20:21–22).

Jen de Combe, the Associate Secretary of Canadian Ministries with The Presbyterian Church in Canada, has a contribution on discipleship and urges that the church move beyond a tired-out Bible study program and to consider new ways of discipleship available to us post-COVID. She suggests COVID-19 has revealed to us three things: 1. We are not okay! 2. We want to live better! 3. Our faith has a place outside of Sunday morning in a church building.

Part of the recognition that "we are not okay" comes with empathy. Andrea Perrett previously served at West Point Grey Presbyterian Church in

Vancouver where she created and led a dinner church, St. Andy's Community Table. She suggests in her chapter on "Empathy" that, "The COVID-19 crisis has amplified the need for empathy." How do we empathetically join those who have been through a pandemic? Listening to others, practicing presence and engaging in empathetic actions are a start.

The chapter on missiology builds on the well-known phrase: "It's not that God's church has a mission, it is that God's mission has a church" and derives lessons from the Babylonian exile and how the church might respond on the other side of the global pandemic. This chapter is written by Matthew Brough, the director of Cyclical PCC, a denomination-wide planting initiative of the PCC (who knew?) and a part-time minister of Prairie Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg.

Daniel So is also with Cyclical PCC and serves as a cohort director through which he gathers and trains church starters in Canada. His chapter is on "Shrewdness," where he argues "shrewdness is *not* taking some kind of advantage of the circumstances to build a bigger audience or platform" but rather "shrewdness compels us to respond to the immense challenges before us, which we did not choose, with creativity, faithfulness and love" (p. 153).

As the title suggests, this volume is "beginning a conversation for a post-COVID church. May these conversations continue on Zoom and safely in person."



MPP Caroline Mulroney joined a multi-faith conversation on re-opening houses of worship chaired by the East Gwillimbury, Ont., President of the Chamber of Commerce.

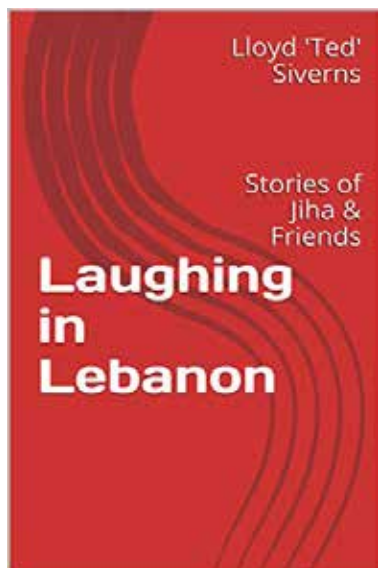
*"The church is not a fraternal organization, country club or social service agency. At its core, the church is not a building for religious services, yard sales or a rental space for choirs or yoga groups. Instead, the church is 'missionary by its very nature,' and that impacts any expression of a Christian community gathered and sent."*

—the Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart, "Ecclesiology" in *Faithful Innovation*.



## PRESBYTERIAN WRITERS

## A Review of *Laughing in Lebanon*



By the Rev. John Congram, former editor of the Presbyterian Record magazine

*Laughing in Lebanon: Stories of Jiha and Friends*  
Written by L.E. "Ted" Siverns, 2020

Most of us would be surprised to find humour and the Middle East in the same sentence. Perhaps tragedy and the Middle East but not humour and the Middle East. Reading Siverns' little book may change your mind.

In this book, Siverns relates stories of Jiha, a wandering wise foolish man who rides about on a donkey, dispensing his own brand of humorous wisdom. Siverns heard these stories while teaching at the Near East School of Theology in Lebanon. Under pressure from his children he decided to lay aside his academic pursuits to record these stories. Jiha, by the way, appears in many Middle Eastern countries under a variety of names.

Dr. Stanley Glen of Knox College used to tell his theological students that their task as ministers was to be fools for Christ's sake, never simply silly fools. Sometimes Jiha appears to be simply a silly fool such as in the following story. On one occasion Jiha offered to answer any two questions for \$100. A man stepping forth boldly asked, "Isn't two questions answered for \$100 a lot of

money?"

"Yes," replied Jiha, "it is, your next question please."

But sometimes Jiha's silly stories illuminate important truths, as can be found in this story: "The person who does not know and does not know that he does not know should be shunned, for he is a fool. The person who does not know and knows that he does not know should be taught, for he is a child. The person who knows and does not know that he knows should be awakened, for he is asleep. The person who knows and knows that he knows should be followed, for he is wise. Of course," said Jiha, "it is difficult to determine if the person who knows that he knows really knows."

Stories like that recall St. Paul's words that God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, what is weak in the world to shame the strong and what is low and despised in the world to bring to nothing things that are. Perhaps some of the Jiha's stories come close to doing that.

The father of Canadian humour, Stephen Leacock, declared that the very essence of good humour is that it must be without harm or malice. Almost all of the Jiha's stories fit this criteria.

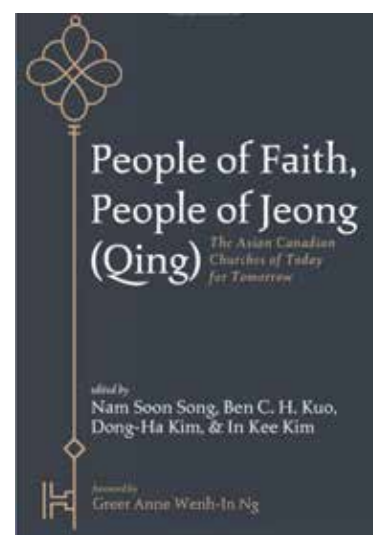
I mentioned at the beginning of this review that we might find it odd to see humour and the Middle East in the same sentence. But often difficult times produce amazing humour. Humour helps us maintain our humanity and strength to navigate difficult times. The author mentions that "Humour was essentially forbidden in Nazi Germany."

So read these stories for their humour, laugh at the silliness of the characters and perhaps at yourself. And if they do not enlighten you, they may lighten your life a little as you journey through the stresses of the present pandemic.

Ted Siverns is a Canadian Presbyterian minister who has served the church as a minister, administrator and teacher in Canada, Lebanon and Taiwan.

## People of Faith, People of Jeong (Qing): The Asian Canadian Churches of Today for Tomorrow

*People of Faith, People of Jeong (Qing)* seeks to reveal and understand the current state and prospective future of Asian-Canadian immigrant churches (ACIC), including Chinese, Taiwanese and Korean churches. Starting with a brief chronicle of ACIC history, this book shares the journeys and stories of current lay and clergy members from various ACIC. The chapters attempt to explain the influence and impact that Jeong and faith have on these churches, to envisage the future of ACIC, and to draw relevant implications for the betterment of these churches going into the future. This book reflects the real voices and sentiments of the first- and second-generation members of these ethnic Asian immigrant churches in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). It is original, authentic, comprehensive and inclusive in its perspectives—the first book of its kind on Asian immigrant churches



in Canada. The book will serve as an inspiration and a practical guide for immigrant churches in cross-cultural and cross-generational transitions. It offers lay people, church leaders and clergy a critical reference as they navigate through the future of churches in North America and beyond.

**Nam Soon Song** is Ewart Professor of Christian Education at Knox College, University of Toronto, Ont. She is the author of "Demythologizing the Silent Exodus: Asian-Canadian Protestant Young Adults," published in the *Journal of Youth Ministry* (2019).

**Ben C. H. Kuo** is a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Windsor, Ont., and a licensed psychologist. His areas of expertise include research and mental health interventions with immigrant and refugee populations.

**Dong-Ha Kim** is the director of basic degree studies and the director of the Centre for Asian-Canadian Theology and Ministry at Knox College, Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto, Ont. Dong-Ha is also an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament within The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

**In Kee Kim** is senior minister at St. Timothy Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

## A Review of *Dr. Bloom's Event*

By the Rev. John Congram, former editor of the Presbyterian Record magazine

*Dr. Bloom's Event*  
Written by Dorothy Brown Henderson, 2020

I begin by offering this reader's alert for those who have read the author's first two novels: Both pertained to the narrative of a young Presbyterian pastor in a small town in Western Ontario. This is not a continuation of that story. In fact, it is quite different.

The author offers the best summary of her story on the back cover of the book: "Maxwell Bloom, a successful and respected surgeon in London, Ontario, stumbles into an opportunity to realize a hidden dream—sponsoring an Arts Event-of-the-Year for the community. But he soon finds his life in chaos when three struggling artists move into his stately home to help him with the event. Each takes advantage of him in unique ways. Now he finds himself staring point-blank into the face of personal struggles he kept hidden away for years: his loneliness, his drive to overwork, estrangement from his family, and the broken ties to his Jewish community. Will the way



forward become clear through delving deep into the arts when harsh realities bump up against his quest for meaning, hope and connection?"

As with her other novels, the author writes about things she knows well, sickness, music, literature and, of course, food. The author's first book was a cookbook, and she presently writes a food column for the magazine, *Rural Voice*. Like her other novels, this one also includes a couple of recipes, which are in this case fittingly of Jewish origin.

In this novel, the author delves deeply into a subject which, until she wrote the novel, was unfamiliar to her and I suspect is also unfamiliar to most readers of this novel. We learn much about Jewish culture and customs, but more importantly, about the history of rejection, discrimination and hardship that Jewish immigrants experienced in London, Ontario. At a time when discrimination is at the forefront of the agenda in our country, this story becomes particularly relevant. What happens to many minorities today had happened to our Jewish brothers and sisters when they first came to this country and, unfortunately, has reared its ugly head again in our own time.

Woven into this story are tales of love and passion, abuse and fractured family relationships, which we have all experienced in some form or other.

The book leaves us with an interesting question as to whether redemption can be found through the arts.

The author is fast becoming the Canadian Presbyterian novelist for the 21st century. You will want to read this book. It will provoke lively discussions in your family, your book club or in your church group.

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## REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

# The Bumpy Road to Freedom

By Dwight Irwin, Knox Presbyterian Church, Kincardine, Ont.

Every person on Earth has been affected by COVID-19.

For one Syrian family, who fled their country seven years ago and lived in a substandard Lebanese refugee camp for six years, the pandemic delayed their long-awaited flight to Canada, where they were excited to start their new life. The family of six was forced to wait many months longer than expected until it was deemed safe enough to travel to Canada.

"The family's application was approved in March 2020 and they were just awaiting their flight schedule when COVID-19 struck, and all flights were cancelled," said the Rev. Kathy Fraser, Chair of the Kincardine Refugee Committee, who is sponsoring the family. "We had just rented a house in the hopes their arrival was imminent, so once flights were essentially grounded this past spring, we just had to keep paying rent and waiting for the borders to open and travel to resume.

"Thankfully the people of Kincardine and area have been incredibly generous with their donations of money and household goods, including furniture, beds, clothes, toys, bikes, games for the kids and

so much more, so the waiting really was the hardest part."

Permission for the family—which includes three boys aged 16, 14, and seven, and a 12-year-old girl—to travel finally came in August and they took to the skies on Sept. 10, with five of the six family members making the long trip to Toronto, and then being chauffeured to Kincardine.

The logistics created by the pandemic made this pick-up from the airport unlike any other. After much research and planning, it was determined that a limousine would be the safest way to transport the family, as the driver could isolate himself via the interior window, while a volunteer interpreter and a member of the committee interacted with the family via cell phone and travelled close by in another car.

The family eagerly awaits the arrival of their patriarch, who had returned to Algeria to work so he could continue to support his family. The group has received news that he will soon be able to travel to Canada to reunite with his family.

"Back in Kincardine, our various committees and many volunteers had spent months preparing their home...and making sure everything was perfect for the family's arrival,

because once they got to Kincardine we couldn't have any [in-person] contact with them due to the quarantine rules."

Once the family completed their 14 days in isolation, the committee arranged school visits, bank appointments, English lessons and ensured their health care needs were met, all of which included the added stresses of language barriers and ongoing COVID-19.

But the family has been proving its resilience for years and is settling into life on the shores of Lake Huron. The committee is now focusing on getting the father to Canada, assisting the family with their English lessons, continuing to integrate them into the community and preparing them for the impending Canadian winter!

*Knox Kincardine has been an active sponsoring group with The Presbyterian Church in Canada since 2016. With the support of PWS&D refugee sponsorship staff, they have already welcomed two families to Canada. This year, PWS&D staff assisted the group to submit a sponsorship application for a third family, as well as provided ongoing support to prepare for the arrival of the family mentioned in this article.*



# A Challenging Year for Refugee Sponsorship

By Winnie Bower, PWS&D Refugee Program Coordinator

As the world came to a significant halt in March 2020 due to the spread of COVID-19, so too did the ability to process privately sponsored refugee applications as visa offices around the world either shut down completely or operated at very limited capacity.

Since August, the Canadian government has prioritized travel arrangements to Canada only for those refugees who had their applications approved before March 18, 2020, and who had received permanent residence visas before the borders closed. Unfortunately, IRCC (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada) has informed us that applicants can expect delays, due to COVID-19; however, it is currently unclear as to what these delays may be.

For the PCC, there were very few

applications at this final stage. Since August, we have been working in collaboration with dedicated congregations and presbyteries to prepare for the safe arrival of these individuals and families, and to ensure that they have a safe and comfortable place to stay during their mandatory 14-day quarantine.

Despite delays in application processing, the effort at the refugee desk has remained constant, as we work alongside 14 congregations/presbyteries to prepare application submissions for refugee sponsorship in 2020.

For all other applications, we remain committed to advocating for faster processing times and a speedy reduction of the backlog of applications caused by COVID-19.

We look forward to continuing to work with Presbyterians from across Canada in the new year. For more information on refugee sponsorship, visit [WeRespond.ca/refugee-sponsorship](https://www.werespond.ca/refugee-sponsorship).



A Syrian family sponsored by Knox PC in Kincardine, Ont., arrives at the Toronto airport in September, after months of delays due to COVID-19.



## PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

# A Year in Review: Standing Up to the Challenge

By Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Director

As we prepare to turn the page on 2020, we look back at how Presbyterians in Canada have responded with us to a world in need. In the midst of hardship here in Canada and in light of even greater hardship elsewhere in the world, Presbyterians have opened their hearts and have generously contributed to our partners' efforts to alleviate suffering.

### COVID-19 Response

When COVID-19 started to spread in the world, PWS&D issued a special appeal to help partners with the changing needs in their localities. Instead of carrying out in-person training sessions, funds were reallocated to purchase hygiene kits and personal protective equipment. In some cases, food needed to be provided to the most vulnerable people who lost their livelihoods as a result of lockdowns.

Presbyterians from across Canada generously responded, including a \$100,000 gift from St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in

Uxbridge, Ontario—thank you. These donations contributed to responses through the ACT Alliance in Bangladesh, Somalia, South Sudan and Israel/Palestine.

### Lebanon Crisis

Thanks to our membership in Canadian Foodgrains Bank, donations received by PWS&D in response to the explosions in Beirut were matched by the Government of Canada. Thank you for contributing \$150,000 in response to the crisis. These gifts enabled a food assistance project through Canadian Foodgrains Bank, in collaboration with the Adventist and Christian Reformed churches. We also responded to other pressing needs through ACT Alliance. These responses, while modest, were life giving and provided hope in a time of despair.

### PWS&D's Legacy Fund: a lifeline in difficult times

Donations to PWS&D's Loaves & Fishes Fund have continued at unprecedented levels in 2020—allowing the fund to grow and provide

PWS&D with a predictable source of revenue in difficult times. Every year, one-seventh of the funds available are transferred to cover PWS&D's expenses.

PWS&D has experienced shortfalls in its donations, especially undesignated donations, in 2020. When combined with the end of funding from the Canadian government for PWS&D's maternal, newborn and child health program, legacy gifts are an increasingly important source of revenue and one more way to make a lasting difference to bring about a more sustainable, compassionate and just world.

### Looking Forward

The pandemic has set the stage for worsening hunger in the world. Nearly 700 million people struggle to find sufficient food, and 98% of those are in developing countries. PWS&D continues to be well positioned to respond to food needs through membership in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Working with other denominations, and with the support



Two men in Yemen read a poster with information about the prevention of COVID-19. PHOTO CREDIT: ADRA

of the Government of Canada, we are able to offer a powerful Christian response to hunger.

Not only are we able to reach people in places where we don't have direct partners, such as Lebanon and Syria, but we are also able to scale up projects where we have direct partners but our own resources are limited. A recent project in Afghanistan, which is helping 1,100 families improve their food security, was made possible through the generous support of the Anglican, United and Christian Reformed churches. With

the multiplication of funds from the Canadian government, the project has a budget of \$875,000.

While 2020 has been a difficult year in so many ways, and a tragic year for so many who lost dear ones to COVID-19, or lost their livelihoods as a result of crumbling economies and lockdowns, we pray that God's healing spirit will accompany us to make wise decisions for our common future. We pray that the celebration of Jesus' birth will bring with it renewed energy to work together at finding sustainable solutions to world poverty.

# Hope in the Midst of Crisis

By Karen Bokma,  
PWS&D Communications

On Aug. 4, 2020, an explosion rocked the port of Beirut, killing hundreds and causing massive damage to homes, grain silos and health care facilities. The United Nations estimates that more than 300,000 people were displaced.

"Hundreds of thousands became homeless in seconds," said Sylvia Haddad of ACT Alliance member, Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR).

The port explosion exacerbated a number of existing crises in Lebanon, including the COVID-19 pandemic, a worsening economic crisis, political instability and a large Syrian refugee population. These factors together have impoverished over 2.7 million people, according to the UN Development Programme.

Additionally, the destruction of much of the country's food store at the port means that access to food is now a daily struggle for many. Most of the food in Lebanon is imported due to the country's limited production capacity. Food prices had al-



Volunteers with the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees help clean up after the Beirut blast. PHOTO CREDIT: DSPR-JCC

ready risen drastically prior to the explosion—approximately 160 percent since October 2019. The consequent increase in hunger is a huge concern.

The economic impacts of the explosion extend far beyond the immediate vicinity of the Beirut port, affecting the whole country.

On August 8, the Government of Canada announced that all eligible

donations made in response to the Lebanon crisis would be matched, ensuring contributions would go further. Presbyterians generously responded by donating \$150,000.

With this support, PWS&D is uniting with local partners to meet immediate needs and provide longer-term support to the most vulnerable populations. Working with partners at Canadian Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance, we are providing vital food and non-food aid.

Local members of ACT Alliance were able to respond without delay. Because of long-standing relationships of trust in the community, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees were well placed to move quickly. Local members took an active role in coordinating the various churches in Beirut to help them respond effectively to avoid duplication and to share resources as best they could.

Samer Laham, of MECC, noted the value of the church's involvement, "People need moral and spiritual support to absorb the trauma. They will also need help to cope with the



An ACT Alliance volunteer delivers food to an elderly woman in Beirut following the explosion. PHOTO CREDIT: HÅVARD BJELLAND/NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID

approaching winter, and with their children's education needs."

Through ACT Alliance partners, PWS&D is helping to rehabilitate homes and schools, as well as provide hygiene supplies, livelihood recovery and educational kits for school-age children.

In response to the very real food needs in Lebanon, PWS&D is working with Canadian Foodgrains Banks members—World Renew and ADRA Canada—to ensure thousands of families have the food they need. Funds contributed were matched up to four times with money from the Government of Canada, multiplying

the impact of donations.

Food vouchers will be distributed over several months, with priority given to the most vulnerable, including female or child-headed households, Syrian refugees or those who were displaced or injured by the explosion. Vouchers allow families to purchase the food they need while also supporting the local economy.

None of this would be possible without the valuable assistance of Presbyterian congregations and individuals.

To learn more about the response, visit [WeRespond.ca/Beirut](https://www.werespond.ca/Beirut).



## PWS&D

# Ride for Refuge Raises Nearly \$30,000

By Stephanie Chunoo,  
PWS&D Communications

Sixty-nine cyclists and walkers geared up in Regina, Victoria, Waterloo, London, Edmonton and Toronto on Saturday, Oct. 3, to participate in Ride for Refuge in support of PWS&D's food security programs.

The Ride for Refuge is a nationwide cycling and walking fundraiser that helps charities raise money for the displaced, vulnerable and persecuted. The Ride looked a little different this year as large groups were unable to gather due to COVID-19, but that didn't stop anyone.

This year marked PWS&D's fifth and most successful year participating in Ride for Refuge. Nine teams cycled, walked and enjoyed other activities to raise almost \$30,000—almost tripling our initial fundraising goal!

The moderator, the Rev. Amanda Currie and her "Walk with the Moderator" team, walked or rode five-4km loops and raised \$4,140. "Throughout the walk day here in Regina, we live streamed PWS&D Mission Moments from the gymnasium. Each one had a speaker sharing about an aspect of the ministry. It was a fun way to share with folks who had sponsored us and with others across the country who might become fu-



The "Walk with the Moderator" team in Regina, Saskatchewan.

ture supporters of PWS&D."

Your incredible support means that PWS&D can help farmers deal with climate change impacts, increase crop yields and improve nutrition value. Ensuring families have access to healthy, nutritious foods and the tools needed to grow them is incredibly vital right now, as the COVID-19 pandemic has put more and more people at risk for acute hunger.

Thank you to all who participated and donated in support of this year's Ride for Refuge. See you next year!



For the second time the Hampton-Spencer family rode in Waterloo region, with hopes of doing it again next year!

## Seven Ways COVID-19 is Increasing Global Hunger

The global pandemic is making it harder for people to feed their families



### Putting food on the table is even harder for vulnerable people

Hunger is a greater risk for those living in poverty, a conflict zone, or people who are elderly or living with a disability.

### Women face a growing burden

The responsibility of caregiving for those who fall ill most often falls on women. With schools closed and children home it is harder to work, increasing the likelihood of hunger if there isn't additional family support.



### Millions depend on a daily wage

The inability to earn daily wages to buy food, combined with a lack of savings, quickly throws many into crisis.

### Emergency food is more difficult to distribute

Food assistance programs are disrupted by restrictions on movement, transportation and group gatherings. 368 million children worldwide are no longer receiving a school meal because of school closures.



### Farmers have trouble getting crops to market

With restrictions on movement, many farmers are unable to move any crop surpluses to sell at markets. Seeds, tools and other inputs are harder to get, and workers can't or won't travel to work.

### People change what or when they eat

When money runs out, many choose to eat less often and feed their families cheaper food like maize or rice. These meals are less nutritious and put many at risk of malnutrition.



### People sell equipment or assets to feed their families

As restrictions go on and people are unable to earn an income, have no savings or live in countries with no social safety net, many choose to sell valuable livestock or tools in order to eat. Recovery is harder and takes longer as a result.

PWS&D is responding to address food needs that are worsening due to the pandemic. Through partners at Canadian Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance, we are helping affected families get through this crisis.

**Learn more at [WeRespond.ca/covid-19](https://www.werespond.ca/covid-19)**



Presbyterian  
World Service  
& Development



Canadian  
Foodgrains  
Bank  
A Christian Response  
to Hunger

Adapted from Canadian Foodgrains Bank, with information from WFP and the United Nations.

**actalliance**



## PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

# Partnering for Sustainability



A nurse performs an antenatal examination on a woman in Malawi. PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL JEFFREY

By Kristen Winters,  
PWS&D Program Coordinator

My first visit to Malawi was in 2018 to visit PWS&D's Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) program. I was struck by the large number of groups involved in the project at the local level, from traditional lead-

ers to community health workers to teen clubs and peer educators—all working to improve the health of their communities. During a monitoring visit two years later, the change was evident—women and girls were more outspoken, there was increased knowledge of maternal, newborn and child health issues, and many stories

of successful change.

The MNCH project, supported by PWS&D and the Government of Canada, wrapped up earlier this year, with approximately 175,000 people benefiting from the project in both Malawi and Afghanistan.

Working with locally based partners, the project enhanced the quality and supply of health services by improving the skills of health care workers and building and renovating health facilities. It encouraged the demand for health services and empowered women and adolescent girls to make decisions about their own health and that of their children, contributing to a reduction in maternal mortality rates. In Afghanistan, maternal mortality declined by 96% and by 75% in Malawi, in the areas where PWS&D worked.

People who participated in the project demonstrated strong knowledge of the importance of maternal health checkups, including ante and postnatal care, and hospital delivery, leading to lower maternal and infant mortality. Education and awareness on gender equality and sexual reproductive health helped reshape men's attitudes, allowing more women the space to advocate for their own health. Increased access to family planning services and information has given women more control over when they have children, alleviating some of the burdens of having children too close together.

In Afghanistan, the project was implemented in four districts in Laghman province, where people had limited, difficult or no access to health care services due to more than three decades of war, insurgent activity, political instability and insufficient



A woman is screened for malnutrition at a PWS&D-established health facility in Afghanistan. PHOTO CREDIT: CWSA

health infrastructure.

To address this need, six health facilities were built to carry out maternal, newborn and child health services and provide education. After a successful handover at the end of the project, these health facilities are now a permanent part of the health system of the Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan, ensuring the sustainability of health services into the future.

The knowledge and skills women gained through the project will live on and continue to spread. Community leaders and volunteers will continue to share messages on safe motherhood and provide a link for young women to health facilities.

Nazia is a mother of three children in Afghanistan, who now shares her positive experiences with the project with other women. She delivered two of her three children in facilities built through the project. "The postnatal services taught me to improve my diet

and to vaccinate my newborn," said Nazia. "I advise the women in my village to go to the health facility for ante and postnatal care as it is good for both the mother and the child."

Ultimately, the strength of the MNCH project lies in local involvement—communities working together to create positive change. In both Malawi and Afghanistan, community-based volunteers and health workers along with local government were actively involved, from project design to completion, which created real ownership over the project.

Through training, meetings and discussions, community members have been empowered to take active roles in promoting safe motherhood and linking others to the services available. Even though our role in the project has wrapped up, community ownership ensures that the successes achieved in maternal, newborn and child health will continue far into the future.

### Since the project began in 2016:

- The number of women successfully delivering at a health facility with a skilled birth attendant increased from 17% to 50% in Afghanistan.
- In Malawi, routine vaccination rates for children under five rose from 69% to 84%.
- In Afghanistan, 64 nurses, midwives and community health workers received comprehensive health care training, with specific emphasis on maternal health services.
- The proportion of women who adopted appropriate feeding practices, including exclusive breastfeeding, increased from 47% to 89% in Malawi.

## COMMITTEES



The International Affairs Committee (IAC) is a body of the General Assembly that helps Presbyterians, congregations and presbyteries stay informed and aware of important international issues in order to support and encourage study, prayer and action.

The members of the IAC are nomi-

nated from across the church and named yearly by the General Assembly. The people on the committee bring a rich array of skills and gifts, each with knowledge or experience in matters such as corporate social responsibility, human rights, vulnerable groups (migrants and/or refugees), economics, trade agreements, peace and human security, ecology, global poverty, interfaith, global health issues such as HIV and AIDS and reformed theology.

The committee spends considerable time prioritizing issues of concern, researching, writing, consulting with ecumenical and local partners,

and engaging in theological reflection as they develop reports and various kinds of resources for the church.

In the past, the committee has covered important issues, such as the theology of peacemaking, global economic justice, debt crisis, food security, human rights (Ten Commandments), globalization (Beatitudes), reconciliation and hope in a multi-faith world (Christian-Muslim relations), water—God's Gift, public health, migration and mining. More recently, the committee has produced work on the treatment of minorities (Palestinians who are citizens of Israel; gender-based vio-

lence; discrimination against people with albinism in Sub-Saharan Africa; people with disabilities/differently abled), climate change, the arms trade, Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA), therapeutic abortion in Nicaragua, the Rohingya crisis, Canadian Peacekeeping in Mali, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Israel-Palestine conflict, Goldcorp's Marlin Mine in Guatemala, and Dialogue with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan on the rights of Indigenous people.

More information can be found at [presbyterian.ca/iac](http://presbyterian.ca/iac).

# International Affairs Committee

Presbyterians Sharing  
supports visionary  
leadership and the  
governance of the  
PCC through the  
General Assembly  
and its committees.





## GATHERINGS



### Safety First

Congregations and ministries are continuously innovating and adapting to the changing circumstances of COVID-19 so that their communities can gather and enjoy fellowship in the safest possible conditions, ensuring masks and other necessary PPE are worn, appropriate physical distance is maintained and health regulations are adhered to.



The people of Mill Woods Presbyterian Church in Edmonton, Alta., were delighted to welcome into membership by Profession of Faith, Griffin, Julius and Riley, who completed the Presbytery of Edmonton-Lakeland Youth Confirmation Retreat last February. The families were present in the sanctuary and the rest of the congregation connected online. Following worship, the congregation helped celebrate by driving by the church and offering their congratulations.



The Ecumenical Campus Ministry, the on-campus home of the Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church at the University of Guelph, held an outdoor Fall Day Retreat at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre in Puslinch, Ont., in September. In a season when students are studying online, opportunities for connection through campus ministries have become important for mental well-being.



Although the online Sunday church services and social mingles Richmond Presbyterian Church in Richmond, B.C., has provided have been wonderful, the congregation has missed in-person gatherings and has yearned to find ways to connect safely. Fortunately, nearby forests and trails provide an ideal setting to connect outside and safely meet together in "Nature's Cathedral." The RPC Walkers and Hikers Fellowship program has been part of the Care and Fellowship Team ministry for some years, but it has been of even more value these past six months. After self-screening, participants walk in pairs and gather for a fellowship time outside a coffee shop or at park picnic tables.



Summerside Community Choir recently resumed Tuesday evening practices at Summerside Presbyterian Church in Summerside, P.E.I. While there are no upcoming concerts planned, the choir hopes to put some recordings online for people to enjoy. Not all members were comfortable coming out to practice or sing wearing a mask, but those who have returned are delighted to sing together again.



## GATHERINGS



Wendy Paterson, part-time Pastoral Care coordinator at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kitchener, Ont., marked Orange Shirt Day on Sept. 30 with a special orange shirt designed by her step-granddaughter, who is half Inuit.



Indoor worship resumed at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Halifax, N.S., in mid-August, with services at 9:30 and 11 a.m. Pictured here is the Rev. Michael Koslowski modelling his specially made face mask.



On Oct. 3, 2020, ten cyclists from the Presbytery of London, Ont., participated in the Ride for Refuge in support of PWS&D food security programs. They rode because they believe in a world where everyone should have enough to eat. Fifty-four donors helped raise \$2,370, exceeding both the presbytery's and PWS&D's fundraising goals. The successful ride ended with a bagged lunch enjoyed outdoors.

Pictured above (left to right) are Richard Cote, Chalmers PC; Kent Buchanan, St. James PC, North Yarmouth; Alison (granddaughter of the Rev. Jim Patterson); Cecilia Lunn, St. James PC, North Yarmouth; Spencer Buchanan, St. James PC, North Yarmouth; Tom Currie, Knox PC, St. Thomas; the Rev. John Bannerman, Chalmers PC; Janine Lunn, St. James PC, North Yarmouth; the Rev. Jim Patterson, St. James PC, North Yarmouth; and Jackie Bannerman, Chalmers PC, in the foreground. Not riding was Inge Stahl, St. Lawrence PC, who prepared lunch.



On Aug. 29, 2020, Caledonia Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, Ont., hosted an outdoor concert on the front lawn of the church as part of "Play Music on the Porch Day"—an initiative in which thousands of people across the world participated to unite the world through music. Pictured is the Rev. Janice Doyle's family (her husband, Brian, and daughter, Jada) singing to an audience, as well as to drivers and pedestrians on the busy main street of town.



On July 19, 2020, the Rev. Amanda Currie, Moderator of the General Assembly, walked and prayed for the three Presbyterian churches in Brampton, Ont.—St. Andrew's, St. Paul's and North Bramalea. To support Amanda, 16 members (and two dogs) from the three churches walked around Chinguacousy Park together. Five members of North Bramalea walked from their church to Chinguacousy Park and back. Two members of St. Andrew's joined the group virtually by walking along a trail near their cottage in Quebec. The Rev. Geoff Ross, on vacation at the time, swam 1.6 km in spirit with the St. Andrew's group! The group walk was a wonderful experience and a demonstration of Christian unity.



## GATHERINGS



Caledonia Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, Ont., was recently able to host the Moms' Group in person again. Members played Bingo for homemade goodies and pandemic-themed prizes, including soap, sanitizers and a face shield. It was good to see the moms come together again safely in person!



The official resumption of in-person worship at Caledonia Presbyterian Church in Caledonia, Ont., concluded with "Careful Coffee" in our parking lot. We were so grateful for the perfect weather this day, especially since it had been so long since we were last able to share in this way.



During the quiet months of the shutdown, members of the Prayer Shawl ministry at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bracebridge, Ont., were busy knitting and crocheting prayer shawls and blankets to bring comfort to people going through difficult times. The fruits of their labour were dedicated during a "hybrid" service on Sept. 27, 2020, with some worshippers gathering in-person and others joining online. The shawls and blankets were donated to Andy's House Hospice in Port Carling, a new hospice that welcomed its first residents in October 2020. Pictured above are (left to right) Elaine Heron, Clerk of Session, the Rev. Dr. Heather Malnick, Sharon Veitch, crafter, and Elizabeth Northey, coordinator of the Prayer Shawl ministry. Pictured is Sandra Winspear, Executive Director of Hospice Muskoka, holding up one of the donated prayer blankets.



As the seasons change and the days become shorter (yet seem longer), we now find ourselves in the seventh month of physical distancing. Never have the lyrics of "We Are the Church" taken on such meaning: "The church is not a building...the church is a people." At St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont., we have continued to minister to, maintain and sustain our community through worship, celebrations of life, laughter, tears, sharing and giving. Two of our recent mission and outreach activities have been mask sales and trunk offerings.



Prayers, reflections  
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for the season

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 The Presbyterian Church in Canada



## GATHERINGS



In September, the youth group at Lucknow Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, Ont., donned layers upon layers of warm clothing to gather for an outdoor movie night. Before the movie began, the Rev. Paul Sakasov led in devotion and prayer. PHOTO CREDIT: THE REV. PAUL SAKASOV.



On Oct. 4, 2020, First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., finally ordained its two newest elders and admitted them to Session. Tamara Chapman and Brenda Fisk were elected at the Annual Meeting in early March, but had to wait until October for ordination at the first public worship service since March 15. Welcome and congratulations to Tamara and Brenda! The congregation of First PC, Brockville, is thankful for their willingness to answer God's call and share their gifts.



The congregation of Lochwinnoch Presbyterian Church in Renfrew, Ont., has been worshipping online since March 2020. The congregation has been active in sharing photos for many special Sundays. For Thanksgiving Sunday, members sent in photos of "Thankful Hands" and one member created a display to share online.

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont., is figuring out what Advent and Christmas celebrations might look like as ministry continues for the still sheltering-at-home congregation. The Rev. Barb Molengraaf—a self-admitted out-of-the-box pastor—has already come up with some exciting, creative ideas, such as distributing plasticine Advent wreaths to all of the children and hosting a silent Christmas Eve candlelight sanctuary "walk to the crèche." Most recently, the church welcomed the arrival of a long-awaited, handcrafted, outdoor nativity scene.



In August, after months of virtual meetings, the youth group at Lucknow Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, Ont., met safely in person for pizza and s'mores. People took turns getting pizza and roasting marshmallows from individual s'more packages. PHOTO CREDIT: THE REV. PAUL SAKASOV.



## GATHERINGS



Worship together at Dorchester Presbyterian Church in Dorchester, Ont., is prepared on separate days before being shared as a completed whole on our YouTube channel. There is prayer, scripture and Word all out of doors; music preparation is often in the sanctuary with Claire Kim, pianist and music worship leader. Hymn duets on this day were shared by Dorothy Atkins and Tom Charlton.



This summer, Crieff Hills Retreat Centre in Puslinch, Ont., a ministry supported by the PCC, welcomed three Soay lambs (a primitive Scottish breed of sheep) who will help control invasive shrubs on the property.



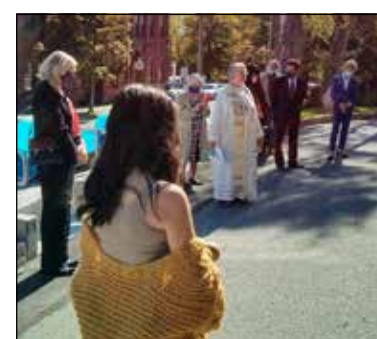
Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., put together 13 Comfort Care Kits for residents at Evangel Hall Mission and Portland Place who are in need of a little extra care. The Comfort Care Kits were filled to the brim with activity booklets, snacks, personal care items, knitted goods, a mask and gloves, and an encouraging card. Tyler at Evangel Hall Mission (pictured left) was very excited to receive the bags on behalf of both Evangel Hall Mission and Portland Place.



In mid-September, the Cyclical Vancouver Discerners held its first in-person event in six months, meeting on the University of British Columbia's campus for discussion and take-out in the park. Participants who are discerning the establishment of new worshipping communities shared with one another what it has been like to plan something new in the midst of a global pandemic—there are challenges and opportunities!



The Presbyterian Church of Saint David in Halifax, N.S., had a joyful celebration on Oct. 4, 2020, titled, "Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord as We Ring in the New!" New steps, a new front and a new sign are a welcoming sight in the downtown neighbourhood. Members of the congregation, along with interim moderator, the Rev. Iona MacLean, gathered outside to ring bells and shake rhythm instruments as elder Barbara MacKeigan cut the ribbon.





## GATHERINGS



Staff at the PCC's national office in Toronto, Ont., showed off their orange shirts on Sept. 30, 2020, in recognition of Orange Shirt Day. This day was designated to commemorate the Indian Residential School experience, to witness and honour the healing journey of survivors and their families, and to commit to the ongoing process of reconciliation.



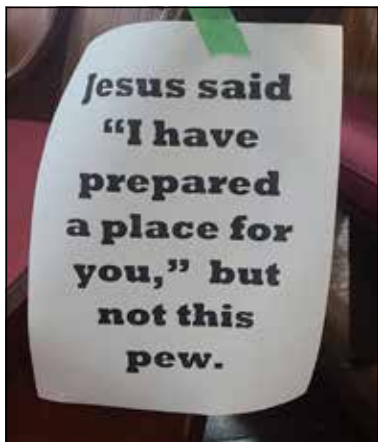
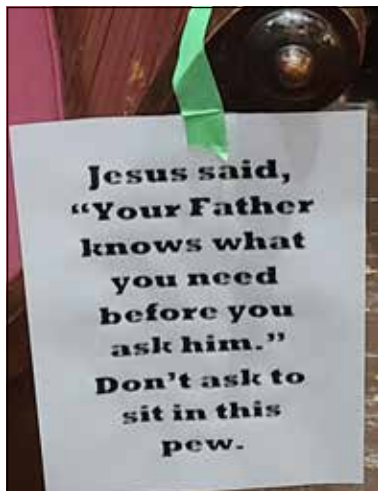
On Sept. 27, 2020, members of Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., gathered together in person and online to recognize Orange Shirt Day (September 30).



Marjorie Douglas of Willowdale Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., celebrated her 110th birthday with close family and received greetings from around the world.



## GATHERINGS



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., took part in October's Ride for Refuge on bikes and by foot. This is the fifth year Team Lightning Bolt has taken part to raise funds for PWS&D. Despite the COVID-19 challenges, the team raised over \$3,600. Featured in the photos above are: founding member, Thomas (centre), flanked by his parents, Steve and Victoria; Andy Li, getting ready for his ride; the Rev. Peter Ma and Mora Ma, who found a beautiful place to walk; Marlene Buie, David Banfield, Jennifer Banfield and Bev Fairman participating in the walk.

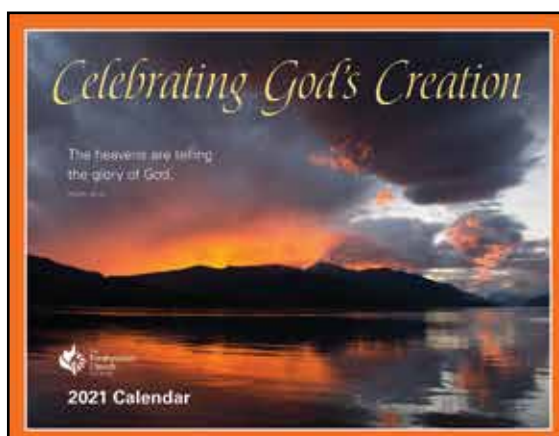
Signs, signs, everywhere are signs at First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont. The congregation resumed worship in the church building on Oct. 4, 2020. Church staff and the Leading with Care Committee worked hard to ensure the safety of the congregation and visitors, and to comply with all guidance from the local health unit. Hand sanitizer, masks and face shields, and directional signage are the order of the day. However, that did not prevent the use of some humour!



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont., has decided to continue with online worship for the time being. Online worship includes hymns led by worship leader, Shelly Watson, preludes and postludes provided by choir director, Paul Pacanowsk, and service by the Rev. Barb Molengraaf with the tech assistance of Stacey Wantenaar. While worship is still being offered online, the Rev. Barb Molengraaf's online "Pastor's Chats" morphed into outdoor chats on church grounds this fall.



Each week on Thursdays at 2 p.m., Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., invites friends for an online Community Café. It is a time to gather for virtual coffee or tea, catch up with friends, and enjoy fellowship safely and comfortably from home.

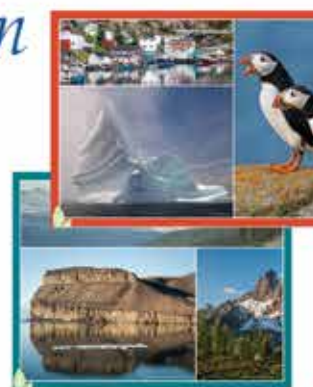


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## GATHERINGS



The congregation of First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, N.S., honoured elders Peter MacKay (left) and Fraser Munroe (right) on the 50th anniversary of their ordination to the eldership on Oct. 18, 2020. They were both ordained on Oct. 18, 1970. The Rev. Shelly Chandler (centre) presented each of them with a plaque and card in appreciation for their many faithful years of service in which they provided spiritual support and guidance to the congregation, church and their community.



This August, Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., teamed up with Never Too Late, a General Education Development (GED) program for adult learners in Calgary, to host outdoor graduations in the Grace parking lot for 22 students. Laura, a Never Too Late graduate, poses with her daughter and husband, at the outdoor graduation ceremony.



The Rev. Jon Van Den Berg leads worship at Dorchester Presbyterian Church in Dorchester, Ont., on Tuesday mornings with our volunteers. Worship was held outdoors from July until October and is shared online every week for people to participate in their own personal time of Sabbath, praise and from wherever they may be. The outdoor worship team consists of the Rev. Jon Van Den Berg, Dorothy Atkins, Janet Carter, Wally Lisowyk and Linda Charlton. Worship and praise are shared, and all are welcome.



On Oct. 25, 2020, Dr. Albertha Henry-Carmichael was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament by the Oak Ridges Presbytery at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (RHPC) in Richmond Hill, Ont. The ordination service was live streamed for those who could not attend in person. In attendance were presbytery moderator and ruling elder, John Buie; the Rev. Dr. John Vissers; presbytery clerk, the Rev. Jeff Loach; the Rev. Duncan Jeffrey of RHPC; presbytery and congregation members; Chaplain George Sytnyk, multi-faith chaplain from Mackenzie Health; as well as Albertha's family and friends. All were honoured to attend and congratulate the Rev. Dr. Albertha Henry-Carmichael. May God be with her as she continues in Jesus' service. PHOTO CREDIT: ROGER POTTS.



## NEWS

# The Ultimate Presbyterian Connection?



The Rev. John and Shari Green at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Campbell River, B.C.

*By the Rev. Robert Kerr, retired minister and member of the church family at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Campbell River, B.C.*

Immediately after the pandemic shutdown began, the Rev. John Green, minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church, and his wife Shari, started leading us in online worship from their home here in Campbell River, B.C. While John led us in worship, Shari played music on her piano. They did an excellent job of keeping us together as a church family.

As the weeks passed, they became

more and more technologically adept, and others joined in to help make this worthwhile worship experience possible. Soon it came time for Shari to reclaim her office in their house, and production of the weekly live stream was moved to the sanctuary at the church. The congregation continues to value the sense of immediate connection they enjoy by “being together” at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings. We have also enjoyed excellent worship led remotely by other ministers on two occasions, one from as far away as South Africa!

Each Sunday, Norma Ashcroft,

our representative elder, talks to her sister Julia who lives in a rural farming area in northern Scotland. During their talks, Norma told Julia how much she appreciated still being able to be part of church through the wonders of modern technology. Julia, on the other hand, lamented the loss of church in her life. The congregation in her rural area only meets sporadically in a nearby hall, and the nearest church, in a larger centre, is too far for Julia to travel. Now part of a multi-point charge, she rarely even hears from her minister. And on top of that, there is no Internet connection where Julia lives.

This dilemma set Norma thinking. How could she reconnect her sister to church? The answer turned out to be relatively simple. Each Sunday as Norma connects to Zoom to be part of the worshipping community at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Campbell River, she also phones her sister in Scotland. She then places the phone by the computer speaker, and Julia can listen to the worship service and hear the church family sharing fellowship as we do before and after. To make it even more real, Norma sent Julia a photograph of the Rev. John Green while he was preaching. When worship begins, Julia props the picture of John up nearby so she



Julia's rural home in Scotland.

can see the person who is leading her in worship!

Through computer technology, the Zoom online platform, a phone connection and a photograph, Julia is now part of a church family, even if it is some six thousand kilometres away.

While the pandemic may have temporarily shuttered or reduced the

numbers in our sanctuaries, it has also brought out such creative thinking that has made it possible for the gospel to be shared far and wide.

A congregation in western Canada welcomes a regular participant from northern Scotland through one of the simplest and most readily available means. Is this not the ultimate Presbyterian connection?

# Growing and Connecting in Dorchester

*By Linda Charlton, Elder, Dorchester Presbyterian Church in Dorchester, Ont.*

March 2020 was a time of learning to let go of familiar routines and deadlines. Since then, the congregation of Dorchester Presbyterian Church in Dorchester, Ont., has learned a little more each week. Mostly, we try to step back and remember that it's okay—we are not meant to be in control of, or know everything. It was during our new beginning through outdoor worship that we could reflect upon our faith journey in very special ways.

We are a small group expanding our comfort levels by stretching into the world of technology and finding

new means for engagement with people. Through website development, Facebook and online worship, we've learned the importance of engaging with people where they are and in their own personal times of Sabbath, too. This time of new beginnings is a journey in taking time to be still, and listening for how we are called by the Spirit and how to respond to Christ's call.

We are like the falling leaves in autumn! We are tossed and blown about just before a new season arrives. In Christ the chaos of tossing and turning will change, and there will be new growth again. In this way, we try not to define ourselves with worry even in a time of immense change. We are at home



Dorchester Presbyterian Church in Dorchester, Ont.

in our community and continue to build our outward-focused ministry through relationships. Today, we are graced with increasing opportunities to engage in new ways with seniors, presbytery youth and others.

We think often of the little girl who attended a youth family event hosted by our worship team pre-COVID. She experienced an active story of Jesus at our event: the story of the miraculous catch of fish when Jesus

was in the boat. Later she asked her parents, “Can we go to the church where we can fish?”

We celebrate engagement with people through Facebook, too. We think of a gift; a beautiful handpainted picture inspired by a colouring page that was shared on our website and sent to us by an artist from the United States.

It's through engagement, too, in online worship that volunteers willingly participate in readings, prayer and music. It is an honour to experience a first meeting online and evolving conversation through social media. People have also reached out through social media about having a marriage or other significant life event take place for them in the Dorchester Presbyterian Church building and in our faith community.

In a time of pandemic, we can grow in personal connection and support of each other in kindness and care. We pray to be good stewards of God's blessings and keep moving forward through Christ, using a variety of spiritual gifts in our community, all to serve Christ and one another.



## NEWS

# Changes at Prescott-Spencerville Pastoral Charge

## How Should the Church Change?

By the Rev. David Hooper,  
 St. Andrew's and St. Andrew's-Knox  
 Presbyterian Churches in  
 Prescott and Spencerville, Ont.

The COVID-19 lockdown forced us Presbyterians to change. Change is not easily accepted among us, but churches closed and the familiar service of worship disappeared. Instead, we went online and attended church from home, even celebrating Holy Communion this way. This forced change was the seed to what happened next at St. Andrew's and St. Andrew's-Knox Presbyterian Churches in Prescott and Spencerville, Ont.

St. Andrew's and St. Andrew's-Knox joyfully (without singing) began to worship in our sanctuaries again on Sunday, June 28, 2020. During that first service, some ways of doing church differently were presented. This was prompted by a quotation from an article in the Summer 2020 edition of this newspaper by the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald, who challenged

us with this question: Do we want to be a "later that same day" church or a "nine o'clock in the morning" church? The difference, he suggests, is that "one unquestioningly repeats old patterns, risking paralysis and gloom, while the other is freed to make choices and embrace hopeful new ways of living."

The challenge was put to both churches with examples of ways we could be different from how we were on March 15, 2020. These suggestions were to enable us to even more fully: "Love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves." A survey was sent out to all members of the two churches with an opportunity to respond by email, phone or in writing.

### A) Changes in worship for our spiritual health and growth:

1. That we consider celebrating Holy Communion once a month. In our Protestant churches, we have not



St. Andrew's-Knox Presbyterian Church in Spencerville, Ont.

put as much emphasis on the sacramental aspect of Christianity. Holy Communion is a uniquely Christian action that brings the presence of Jesus Christ into our midst through the bread and the cup. We are drawn into His presence in a way like none other.

2. That we consider praying together as a church in the place of the pastoral prayer once a month. We would gather at the front of the sanctuary and ask for requests for prayer, and pray together. This does not mean that you must pray aloud. You are invited to if you wish. Just by being there you are participating. This is what we truly call the "fellowship of prayer." It would be like having a short prayer meeting at the end of the service.

3. That we consider having Good News Reports once a month. This would give members the opportunity to share with the congregation what God is doing in their lives. It could be an answered prayer, an "Aha" moment during worship, the voice of God speaking to you through scripture, a

miracle or a way that God has touched your life. When members share their experiences, their stories bind us together as the body of Christ.

4. That we consider focusing on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the whole Trinity of God. Our churches have almost forgotten about the third person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit. We would allow more intentionally the Word of God to touch our hearts and empower us to share our story through the power of the Holy Spirit. Where will the church be in 15 years if we do not share our faith with others today?

### B) Outreach—reaching out into our community and beyond:

1. That we consider having a once-a-month outreach focus at some point during worship. We could collect food for the food bank; take up a special offering for PWS&D or some local organization. This would be an intentional time to look beyond ourselves.

2. That we in Prescott begin to pray for and support the young people who are attending Youth for Christ. You can choose the name of one of the kids and pray for them and perhaps help them in other ways that we may identify as time goes on.

3. That we look for other ways to reach out to our communities. Suggestions are most welcome.

### C) Personal growth:

1. That we continue to promote members spending time each day reading the Bible. Getting God's Word into our lives is an important part of being a Christian. You can use resources like *Our Daily Bread* or other guides to the Bible. Fifteen minutes a day, preferably in the morning, will keep you closer to God and

God's truth.

2. That we continue to promote members spending time each day in prayer. As one child said in response to why he prays: "God is my friend and friends like to know what is going on in their lives."

3. That we, from time to time, form small groups to gather together for three or four weeks at a time and study specific areas of our faith. It could be based on a question that many members have always wondered about from our faith. Why do you believe in God? What about the Holy Spirit? How do I know that I am saved and going to heaven?

As responses were submitted, it became clear that almost everyone wanted to become "nine o'clock in the morning" churches. Sessions then discussed and prayerfully selected two or three changes that would be implemented in the fall. Each congregation made specific changes that they thought would be in keeping with their worship and mission experience.

Some of the changes introduced are: Holy Communion 10 times a year on the first Sunday of the month, a focus on missions one Sunday a month, joining for a time of prayer at the end of the service whenever the Holy Spirit moves us to do so, focusing on a greater understanding and experience of the person of the Holy Spirit, and supporting the youth group led by Youth for Christ. The personal growth section was a given and, once we can, small groups will begin to meet. It is wonderful to experience the leading of the Holy Spirit as we risked making changes in our church experience during this time of dramatic change in our world.

Praise God!



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Prescott, Ont.

# Preserving Pumpkinfest 2020

By the Rev. Anita Van Nest,  
 Stamford Presbyterian Church  
 in Niagara Falls, Ont.

Every year for the past 18 years, Stamford Presbyterian Church in Niagara Falls, Ont., has held Pumpkinfest on the first Saturday in October. Over the years it has changed in many ways, but it has always been an opportunity to offer hospitality and celebrate God's abundance with our neighbours and community. What a

joyful festival of gathered friends it has been! But, of course, that gathering couldn't happen this year.

A small group of members asked the question: Is there anything we can do to reach out into our community and let our neighbours know that we care for them and are praying for them during these most challenging times?

And so with that, "Preserving Pumpkinfest 2020" was envisioned.

It was hard to change our ways of thinking and doing this event after so



many wonderful years. We were determined not to promote any type of gathering, yet we wanted to keep all the joy of this beloved tradition.

We decided to offer pre-orders of a selection of comfort foods—soups, jams, meat pies, pumpkin pies, pumpkin loaves—and a children's



activity kit. Some of these items were made in our church kitchen by small groups of physically distanced, masked volunteers, while others were made at home.

Saturday, Oct. 3, 2020, was our pick-up day. Cars drove up to our church doors at pre-designated

times, and we loaded their pre-packaged grocery orders into their back seats or trunks. It was wonderful to see so many familiar sets of eyes above masks, and it was wonderful to be able to share comfort, care and joy with our neighbours, especially now.





## NEWS

# Community Service Scholarship

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

Elder Robin Saunders of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont., is passionate about making positive contributions to the lives of young people. Robin was ordained as an elder when he was a teenager; this perhaps is one of the reasons that inspired him to create opportunities to recognize teens for their involvement in the community. In developing a five-year plan for St. John's Presbyterian Church, he insisted that we include a scholarship program for secondary school students. And so we did.

Last year, we presented two awards for graduating students from Bradford District High School. One award was for the graduating student with the most community service hours who planned to go on to higher education, and the other was for the graduating student with the most community service hours who



Robin and Linda Saunders.

planned to go directly into the workforce. These awards were presented virtually this past June.

A small committee was tasked

with coming up with eligibility criteria for applicants of the St. John's Community Service Scholarship. The idea was to reward young people for

their service within the church and within the community. Seven young people applied and all were awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Their applications included a résumé, references and a description of their involvement in community service projects. The service opportunities listed included service to the church, in the areas of Children & Worship, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Board of Managers, special needs support and community meals, as well to community organizations, such as Scouts, student government, clubs, etc.

After our local newspaper ran a story about the recipients, our local MPP, Caroline Mulroney, contacted the church and asked if she might write a letter of congratulations to the students. She said, "It is truly commendable and worth recognizing."

Here are their names of the students and the programs in which they are enrolled:

Amanda Cook – HBA Sociology at Carleton University  
Kayla Cook – BA Criminology and

Justice at Carleton University  
Ashley Guay – MA Gerontology at Brock University  
Amaly Inthavong – BA Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University  
Anastasia McConville – BA Communications at University of Waterloo  
Jacob Reimer – MBA Business Leadership at University of Fredericton  
Taylor Reimer – MSc Communications at Purdue University

In a thank-you letter to the Community Service Scholarship Committee, one of the recipients, Ashley Guay wrote, "Within our church's walls I have prayed, laughed, smiled and cried. Our church has truly been a part of my growth, my strength and the development of my faith."

Outside the walls of the church, she and a number of other young people have excelled in the area of community service. And, thanks to the vision of an elder like Robin Saunders, they have been helped with their education so that they might continue to serve others.

# Living Christmas Tree in Lindsay

*Submitted by Connie Shannon  
(Chair), Joy McMillan, Sally Rogers  
and Joye Daniels, the Living Christmas  
Tree Committee of St. Andrew's  
Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont.*

Since December of 1982, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont., has begun the Christmas season with "The Living Christmas Tree." This annual service takes place in late November/early December, and is presented six times, on two consecutive weekends. "The Tree" has become well-known in the town of Lindsay and surrounding areas, as well as further afield. Folks in Lindsay refer to our church on William Street as "the church that has the Tree!"

The Living Christmas Tree is a 40-foot-high wooden structure built at the front of the sanctuary each year. It is covered with artificial green boughs and "decorated" with about 7,000 lights in colours of green, red, blue and gold. Additionally, there are icicle lights, plus twinkle lights around the framework of the Tree. There are five levels to the Tree, on which the choir stands. During the singing of the cantata, the lights change colours and vary in intensity to visually enhance the meaning of the words, scripture and narration.

Each year, the committee chooses a new cantata, with the exception of three years when a cantata was repeated. We spend much time listening to several works of music to ensure we choose the "right one"—one that tells the story of Jesus' birth, including the people of Israel waiting and praying for a Saviour, the angel appearing to Mary and Joseph, the journey to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus in a lowly stable, the angels appearing to shepherds, the wise men worshipping the infant King. As well, we are mindful to include Jesus' death on a cross, so that we may be saved.

Normally, by this time of year, the committee would have listened to many different new cantatas and made our selection, and the 60-voice choir would be in rehearsals. But, in 2020, how do we practice when we can't be in our sections, hearing each other and supporting each other? How do we have "get to know you" times? Most importantly, how do we put 60 people in the Tree, and, for each presentation, have 18 ushers, 10 safety people, audio and visual people, lighting people, plus childcare, and keep everyone safe? As well, the usual attendance for each service is 525 people. It is very obvious that an event such as this simply could not proceed during

COVID-19, and with regret, our 2020 Living Christmas Tree Presentations were cancelled.

However, this decision doesn't mean we cannot fulfill our vision for the Tree, which is: "We want to reach out to our non-churched community, and reach in to our church family using their gifts and talents, by presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ in a clear and non-threatening way, to the Glory of God" (August 2015).

It is our feeling that this year, perhaps more than ever, people are in need of a message of hope, and of love. With that in mind, we are working to produce a virtual Christmas tree. Our presentation for 2020 will not be given from our sanctuary with the 40-foot-tall "Living Tree," but by means of technology. It will be a video compilation of previous Living Christmas Tree presentations, along with narration and scripture, with visual backgrounds and images. This video will be available on our YouTube channel, as well as on our church Facebook page. For further information and dates of the virtual presentations, please check our website at [standrewslindsay.com/living-christmas-tree](http://standrewslindsay.com/living-christmas-tree) as well as our Facebook page: [facebook.com/StAndrewsLindsay](https://www.facebook.com/StAndrewsLindsay).

It is our prayer that viewers will



enjoy and be blessed by our virtual tree this Christmas, and find a measure of love, joy, comfort and peace in the midst of this pandemic.

The format is certainly different, but the wonderful story of our Lord, coming to earth to die for us, never changes or grows old.



## NEWS

# Making Connections at Grace, Calgary



Filming worship at Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

By Amy Dunn Moscoso,  
Communications Coordinator, Grace  
Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

## Christmas Pageant Video

Christmas pageants at Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., are so celebrated that the congregation doesn't just hold one, but four: there is a pageant every Sunday in Advent before the worship service.

For December 2020, Grace is creating a Christmas pageant video to share the experiences of children, youth, families and a variety of other members of the Grace church family. The Rev. Maren McLean Persaud, Associate Minister of Children and Youth, said the video is "a chance for families and people at Grace to explore what Christmas, hope and light mean to them when our lives have changed."

This year's pageant involves new opportunities. Interested youth are being invited to join the videographer, Justin Machnik of Uplift Media, who has filmed 30+ episodes of Grace's "3 in 1" online worship videos, to get behind the camera and join in the filming process.

Mentoring youth in the art of filmmaking and videography has been a dream of Justin's for some time. Industry expertise spanning 20-some years is what he described as a "gift I have to share." The video is both an opportunity for people to share gifts—from music to compositions to talents—as well as discover a knack for filmmaking. "A spiritual gift is a muscle that gets stronger and stronger the more you use it," said Justin. Developing them is important as "God uses them in bigger ways."

The video looks like a variety show and a narrative on the pandemic: What does Christmas mean?

What does it look like in a pandemic? What are people's experiences of the pandemic?

The project involves volunteers—kids, youth, families and a variety of Grace church family members—and is a way to create something meaningful to share at Christmas no matter what Christmas brings. Since the video will be released online, it can be shared with the Grace congregation, as well as others. The project embraces stewardship—time, talent and treasure.

Stay tuned! The video is slated for release in December at [gracechurch-calgary.com](http://gracechurch-calgary.com).

## The Gift of Third Space

While the parking lot is typically a place for parking during Sunday morning worship, it has become far more than that in the past two years, before and during the pandemic. To the Rev. Maren, the parking lot is "a third space—it's not the church (which can appear imposing with its hard sandstone walls) and it's not people's houses, but a place to host all kinds of gatherings—faith-based, congregation-based and community-based... It's a comfortable place for the community to visit and a comfortable way for the congregation to come out of the church."

Events in the past two years have included a Stampede community breakfast for more than 700 Grace and Calgary Beltline community residents, as well as Trunk N Treat Halloween events (2019 generated donations of more than 12,000 pieces of candy, dozens of volunteers and more than 200 neighbourhood kids).

Parking lot events such as Trunk N Treat for Halloween "are a fun and playful opportunity. A delightful and easy way to build relationships and

get to know people," said the Rev. Maren. "It is a starting point, in the centre of the neighbourhood, for the church to get out of the door—to get outside of yourself and meet your neighbours."

This, to the Rev. Maren, is important for Grace, as a missional church seeking to "be in the community and effect social change... You can't do that until you know who is around you, get to know them, build relationships and earn trust."

Celebrating Halloween is a way to show that the community can engage with Grace beyond a stereotypical church experience. The celebration is a part of people's lives, and while many people have strong feelings about Halloween, we wanted to make it as fun and safe as possible.

The neighbourhood around Grace has many commercial areas and apartment buildings and is not built well for traditional trick-or-treating. Many families who attend are new to Canada and have never experienced Halloween before. "Isn't it great that the church can facilitate trick-

or-treating for these new families in Canada? The church has to work on finding opportunities for connection that other organizations don't fill," the Rev. Maren concluded.

The 2020 Halloween event was COVID-friendly and was the second successful year of Trunk N Treat, which takes place every Halloween night.



The Rev. Maren McLean Persaud, Associate Minister of Children and Youth, decorates her car for Trunk N Treat.

# Supporting Kenora Fellowship Centre

By Valerie Starr, participant in the  
2019 Healing and Reconciliation  
Tour and member of St. James  
Presbyterian Church in Stouffville,  
Ont.

It was in June 2019, while visiting the Anamiewigummig Kenora Fellowship Centre in Kenora, Ont., with The Presbyterian Church in Canada's second Healing and Reconciliation trip, that my life took on a new direction.

I've always had an appreciation for Indigenous culture and spirituality, but I never knew about the history of residential schools and how it affects Indigenous youth today—the ongoing intergenerational trauma.

Anamiewigummig Kenora Fellowship Centre is a place that exists to clothe, help, feed, love and guide people in Kenora, Ont. The Centre provides a home and necessities for many elders and young people

who have endured the realities of the Indian Residential School System or have aged out of the child welfare system. Offering practical care and support, the Centre journeys alongside Indigenous people who have been displaced or ravaged by addiction and mental health issues.

While on the trip, Executive Director, Yvonne Bearbull, asked me to stand behind the counter while she attended to an issue in another area of the waterfront centre in down-

town Kenora. I helped two men who needed aspirin, a young woman asking for soap and shampoo, and a young man needing a pair of socks.

Another young man asked if he could have a pair of women's underwear because his girlfriend was too embarrassed to ask. Searching through the boxes under the counter, there was nothing for women. I finally found a pair of men's briefs in size small. He said they would do.

The need for this basic item of





## NEWS

# Discussing Mental Health in Calgary

By Brent Harding, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

When it comes to COVID-19, the message from the frontline trenches is grim.

Medical casualties are being cared for and continuing. It is the people in the trenches, the ones at home, whose suffering is unseen.

The Mission Team at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., brought together four mental health professionals to discuss mental health in the midst of one of the 21st century's biggest pandemics.

Unlike the pandemic itself, there are positive signs that despite bleak conditions, Calgarians are starting to come to grips with the consequences of the health crisis.

Adam Hall, a psychologist with a Calgary-area school board, told an October St. Andrew's online panel discussion that the COVID-19 pandemic has created "a very difficult time for families." People are stressed about the virus in others, social isolation, job security and daily news about the pandemic, he said.

A study by the Canadian Psychological Association found substantial increases in mental health issues since the beginning of the pandemic in North America. Mr. Hall said people who follow pandemic news on a daily basis tend to be gloomier than others.

Being distracted by reading, exercise and maintaining contact with

others outside the immediate family tends to result in a more positive attitude. He added that the transition into the winter months makes these distractions all the more important.

With children, there is an opportunity for families to be extra helpful to one another. Picking up groceries, doing some Christmas shopping, shoveling sidewalks or volunteering with aid organizations creates opportunities to get to know neighbours better, Mr. Hall said. One opportunity he told the panel he fully intends to participate in is Christmas carolling. "Carolling is one way to stave off the worst aspects of isolation... Maintaining whatever routines and rituals you have is helpful to children during times of upheaval."

The coronavirus pandemic is having a growing impact on homeless people, according to Ernie Poundmaker of Calgary's Aboriginal Friendship Centre. "The problems (for the homeless) are still there with or without the pandemic," he told the discussion.

Prior to COVID-19 there was a great deal of face-to-face contact between the centre and other resource agencies and their clientele. Mr. Poundmaker said there is increased frustration for clients in accessing resources. That frustration is leading to increased violence in the homeless community.

"It (the pandemic) has been a tough road for us, lots of learning," Mr. Poundmaker said the centre has been able to help meet basic needs with support from the community. "This

Continued from page 38

clothing was an eye-opener for me, so much so, that I vowed to send to the Centre men's and women's underwear four times a year.

That vow has taken on a whole new direction in my life, and I'm so glad it did. The ladies group of my church, St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., packed up a box of socks and underwear worth over \$180 and sent it to the Centre the very next month.

I followed later on in the month with a donation from fellow members of the church. Word spread of my mission to collect clothing for Kenora Fellowship Centre through

members of the church, my ladies golf group, friends and neighbours.

On one occasion, I answered an ad on Stouffville Buy and Sell for a company giving away sample socks that they no longer sold. There must have been 500 socks—none matching—that I washed and made pairs out of. Even though they weren't the same colour, they were at least the same style and made out of Merino wool. I'm sure whoever opened that box in Kenora must have been thinking "What the heck?"

I try to time my donations according to the seasons. This past summer, just when it was getting stifling hot, I was able to send a bunch of

Leaders of the St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., mental health panel. Top row (l to r): the Rev. Jared Miller, St. Andrew's Calgary; Adam Hall, school psychologist, Calgary; Geoffrey Simmins, St. Andrew's Calgary. Bottom row (l to r): Denis Sushkin, Calgary Counselling Centre; Joelle Richardson, carya, Calgary; Ernie Poundmaker, Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Calgary.

pandemic has taught us we have to come together...we are not strangers to difficult times," he added.

Elders are especially important members of the Indigenous community, Mr. Poundmaker noted. As a result, the community pays special attention to its seniors. The Friendship Centre had been doing day trips, taking elders out onto the prairie, allowing them to gather sweet grasses, sage and other native vegetation, the scent of which fills the summer air.

Isolation brought on by the pandemic is having a major impact on seniors, Joelle Richardson of carya, said. Carya is a family-oriented counselling organization in Calgary and within carya, Ms. Richardson focuses on seniors.

An 84% increase in COVID-19-related crisis calls is "very significant," Ms. Richardson told the St. Andrew's panel discussion. Calls through the summer were double that of last year. In addition to the crisis calls, carya is also receiving routine calls such as the need to get groceries, attend doctor's visits, and so on.

"Isolation is a major factor for seniors and can have the health impact of five cigarettes a day," she said. Ms. Richardson agreed with Mr. Hall: "a great mental health tip...we need to turn off the news."

Another tip is to "beware of the

panic virus" such as bathroom tissue hoarding.

While organizations like carya are coping, Ms. Richardson thinks that the pandemic is "making agencies figure out how to make it work."

Fortunately for carya, they have been receiving contributions from people and organizations that they hadn't heard from before. Those funds have been used for things like preparing hampers, providing masks, and in-person visits with seniors.

While organizations like carya and the Aboriginal Friendship Centre are coping, both Ms. Richardson and Mr. Poundmaker expressed concern about the future. For the long-term, Ms. Richardson said they don't know what the future holds for the "collective trauma." "I don't think we will see the impact until further down the road." Carya is "really looking closely at the winter." As traumatic as this pandemic is, Mr. Richardson agreed with Mr. Poundmaker in saying that, "Many older adults are very resilient—they have been through worse before."

Denis Sushkin, of the Calgary Counselling Centre, reviewed the pattern of the epidemic beginning in March. By June, the society had adjusted to the demands of the pandemic. The summer was a period of more unknown until September rolled around and children went back to school.

Technology began to play a noticeably big roll with work-at-home and children being educated at home. "The pandemic accelerated a lot of things that were normally happening," he commented.

Greater use of technology, such as online communications systems like Zoom and Skype, helps people connect with loved ones, making the transition easier, he said. Ms. Richardson commented that that same technology often excludes seniors who are unlikely to have computers.

One of the biggest impacts of the pandemic is on couples and families coping with work-at-home, job loss, and children at home or home-schooling.

A viewer asked about coping with the pandemic and isolation. Ms. Richardson responded that "simply accepting the difference" is an important step. In the Indigenous community, ceremonies help to reinforce individual and community values.

With the epidemic seeming to be endless, Mr. Sushkin said it is important to have a plan. In addition, he noted "hope is more than an emotion."

The 90-minute seminar is the third annual program St. Andrew's Calgary has presented during Mental Health Week. The full-length seminar can be viewed at [youtube.com/c/StACalgary/videos](https://youtube.com/c/StACalgary/videos).

Presbyterians Sharing supports nine Indigenous ministries operating in, by and for Indigenous communities in Canada. This includes Kenora Fellowship Centre.



anything ready to go as his daughter was driving to Calgary and would make a stop along the way. I loaded her up with three big vacuum compressed bags, three black garbage bags and one heavy box of coats. Perfect timing—a God wink for sure.

So, with everyone experiencing a "new normal" this year, mine, too, has taken on something I had not considered a year and a half ago. Whenever I get a bag of gently used items, I can't wait to open it and see what I can wash up and send to Kenora Fellowship Centre. As Christians, we must seek and support justice for Indigenous people in ways that reflect dignity and wholeness.

men's and women's T-shirts. Yvonne was so appreciative as the heat took on a life of its own at the time.

Since then, I've managed to stuff boxes and bags—totalling almost half a ton—of quality used coats, jackets, hats, mitts, gloves, scarves, sweaters, sweatshirts, T-shirts, jeans, blouses, and yes, even new underwear.

James and Robert, who work at the Stouffville post office, are so willing to help that they even taped together two boxes into one to help me save on postage.

Jim Mason, who attends my church and was on last year's trip with his wife, Charlene, asked if I had



## NEWS

# Music for St. Andrew's, Victoria

*By Christine Purvis, Director of Music Ministry, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C. This article originally appeared in the St. Andrew's newsletter, The Link.*

Was it only a few months ago that I was able to arrive nice and early at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C., do a warm-up practice with the choir and then happily play the service music I'd prepared for that Sunday? Didn't life seem so simple back then?

It was late February. I was shopping at Lifestyle Market and heard another customer mention he was stocking up for the pandemic. I shook my head at the silliness. Then, suddenly, everything changed, and the fellow didn't seem so crazy. For a while, buying toilet paper was like searching for the Holy Grail and there were line-ups in front of grocery stores that looked like the kind of thing you'd see for the opening of a new Star Wars movie or big rock concert. Once inside, I'd be faced with gaping holes in the shelves where I used to find the gluten-free flours and other necessities I need. Social distancing, isolation became the norm and "mask or no mask" was the hot topic of conversation—if you had anyone to talk to anymore.

All this pandemic pandemonium has had quite a profound effect on everybody—not to mention those preparing music for services. How do you put together a Sunday service with the church closed and social distancing in force? If you're in the younger set, the word "online" does

not strike the same terror in your heart as those born long before computers became a household item.

I will confess that I've used a computer for some years in a rather dabbling way. My children managed to show me enough to do basic email, banking and Google searches—even if I had to endure a lot of eye rolling at my constant mistakes. If I was going to prepare music for an online setting, I had to learn more computer skills than I ever imagined. After three months of trying, it's becoming a little easier, but if I look thinner and more frazzled these days, it's not just because of my hip surgery.

The "delightful" online process of music making begins, as it always has, with choosing hymns to go with the themes and scriptures. I only need to choose three hymns for each week—one for the "This Week at St. Andrew's" newsletter and two for Sunday, giving some thought to how many verses to include and which ones. After that, I plan out other music: preludes, meditative pieces and postludes. When I can, I like to choose these pieces with the hymn tunes in mind—a lovely postlude that's based on the tune of one of the hymns is often just the thing to end a service. As nimble as my fingers are, all these pieces require a great deal of practice so that they flow in a performance. I find it an advantage to choose the music about a month in advance so I have adequate time for practice.

Once the pieces are chosen and practiced, it comes time to record. Perhaps you have thoughts of re-

cording studios with sound-proofed rooms, numberless expensive microphones, acres of wires and mixing boards with more knobs and buttons than the command post on the Starship Enterprise. In these places, sound engineers can mix the sounds from different sources, fix wrong notes, correct intonation, make things play faster or slower, and a multitude of other amazing things that make you wonder if they actually need the musician. Of course, they also cost hundreds of dollars an hour to use.

So, that's not quite an option. I do some recording in the church sanctuary, where the soundproofing consists of luck and a few signs on the doors that say "RECORDING IN PROGRESS." At home, I have my little music room and the soundproofing is... Well, there's a husband and Max, our Schnauzer Cross dog. I'm not sure who can create the most noise but I'm sure they start competing with each other whenever I start recording. So, I wait until they leave for a walk before attempting to record anything and hope the phone doesn't ring in the middle of things.

Jerry Verwey, who does the sound recording at the church, provides some good microphones and mixing, whereas my home studio is equipped with the microphone built into my iPhone and a program (I call them "apps" if I'm feeling modern) called "Audio-recorder." Brian Titus sometimes helps edit the recordings and can patch in a new ending if there's enough space in the music to make a cut.

Since I hate having mistakes in the

recording, it can take two, three, or more times through a piece before I get one that's acceptable. If I mess up, I record the whole thing again. Once that is done, I send it from my phone to my computer by email—that takes another app, by the way. That way, if I drop my phone or lose it, I haven't lost all my work. From the computer, I play the recording through my iPad connected to small Bose speakers—that took some learning and a few purchases. When I have the recording I like, I file it for use later.

The process for hymns and anthems is slightly different from a straight instrumental piece. If I am recording a hymn myself, I play it on my piano at home and sing along. It's quite tricky to play the piano part, sing the melody and remember all the words. It might take quite a few run-throughs to get all the words and notes right. When our delightful choral scholar, Emma, provides some hymns or music, she does basically the same thing; although Emily, another talented choral scholar, is able to record multiple lines and put them together, something that causes me to sin...yes, it's called envy.

When you hear singing in our online worship music, it's after I record the piano part and send it to our singers. They record themselves as they sing along and send the result back to me.

Some hymns and anthems are recorded at the church with Susie Henderson, Brian Titus and Kilmeny Jones doing the singing. We set up mics at least six feet apart and check



before we start recording. Jerry records and sends our best take to me by email. Other musicians who have played for our service music have recorded themselves and emailed me their recording.

Now comes the time to upload the music onto a program called Slack. Yes, I had to learn another program to do this. It's a handy program as it also allows the Rev. Mitch Coggin, Whitney, our office administrator, Martin, our web technician, and I to communicate online as a group. The music gets uploaded a week before broadcast to give Whitney time to put it all together and add wonderful, lovely pictures to accompany the music. You can watch and enjoy the complete worship videos on our website at [standrewsvictoria.ca](http://standrewsvictoria.ca).

That's how I am able to sleep in on Sunday mornings and still provide music. This way I get to sit and listen to the lovely service with all the parts—mellow and relaxed. This feeling is good for about five minutes after the service finishes. Then I'm back to thinking about choosing, recording, etc., the music for the following week.

## Summer Ministry in Regina



Participants of Vacation Bible School.

*By Sumi Jung, Norman Kennedy Presbyterian Church in Regina, Sask.*

For the past 50 years, Norman Kennedy Presbyterian Church in Regina, Sask., has strived to convey the love of Christ through fellowship, prayer and building relationships with our

neighbours around the church.

Our neighbours include many families with young children who live in apartment complexes that almost surround Norman Kennedy PC. Knowing the difficulties of parents with children who could not go to school due to COVID-19, our church

decided to provide family outdoor activities and Vacation Bible School in-person this summer as an outreach program serving our neighbours.

We prepared outdoor and indoor activities for VBS. Carefully following COVID-19 guidelines, children's masks, hand sanitizers, thermometers and more were prepared. Thankfully, several members of our church and volunteers from a neighbouring church were very supportive teachers, helpers and snack managers.

Our church also offered free Tuesday outdoor activities for the neighbourhood to help support our community. For five weeks each Tuesday, a program of outdoor games, challenges, dancing and other activities were presented, and many of our neighbours (children and their par-



Outdoor activities at Norman Kennedy Presbyterian Church.

ents, too!) participated. Their acceptance and participation were beyond our expectations!

Although it was not an event to preach the gospel, this fellowship brought our relationship with our neighbours closer. We pray that our

neighbours felt the love of the Lord along with the joy and warmth of our church.

Above all, we are so thankful to God for being with us, so that we could carry out our church outreach program safely and successfully.



## NEWS



The concept design for the proposed redevelopment of Knox Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ont., by architect Michael Wilson.

# Next Chapter for Knox Stratford

*Jointly released by Knox Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ont., and the Stratford Arts and Culture Collective*

The congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ont., has embarked on an ambitious redevelopment plan that will see portions of their historic downtown church renovated into much-needed space for local performance and cultural programming, in addition to ongoing church worship programming and community outreach.

Knox initiated the planning process by partnering with the Stratford Arts and Culture Collective (SACC), which represents 30 local artistic and cultural organizations, as well as numerous independent artists that came together four years ago with a shared focus on the development of community-based performance space in the city.

Knox also engaged Trinity Centres Foundation (TCF) to explore financing options, governance models and development requirements. TCF is a pan-Canadian charitable organization that specializes in preserving and sustaining churches by enhancing their community presence and impact.

"The cost of maintaining this beautiful church is a significant challenge for the congregation at Knox," said Allan Rothwell, chair of a task group struck three years ago to assess future options for the congregation and the building.

"Conversations with SACC allowed us to see that we could respond

to the real requirement for flexible community-based performance and arts space, along with the need for socially responsible housing, while sustaining our congregation and continuing to serve the community."

A building assessment study commissioned by Knox in 2017 revealed that the church building needs approximately \$1.6 million in repairs, along with additional funds to repair the numerous stained-glass windows. So far, the church has invested \$300,000 in new roofing sections, slate and roof drain repairs.

Last year, Knox commissioned architectural concepts that envisioned new construction to replace the yellow brick section at the back of the church with a revenue-producing socially responsible housing component.

Those concepts also proposed additional uses for the sanctuary and other parts of the church building for large and small-scale performance spaces and not-for-profit tenants and their operations.

"Stratford is known worldwide as a leader for high-standard professional arts and culture, yet we lack state-of-the-art theatre, highly flexible performance space where local, community-based organizations can flourish and be showcased," said Ron Dodson, who co-chairs the SACC.

"With this partnership with Knox, we are answering that call to 'expand the tent' to provide facilities for arts and culture for all Stratford citizens to participate in the arts."

Dodson also noted that there is a

strong alignment of the community service values that Knox and SACC share and a desire to be a downtown site for local activities.

This new vision for Knox allows the congregation to continue to use a multi-purpose assembly space designed for regular worship services, as well as the use of the performance space in the sanctuary for special holidays and events. Knox will maintain its community outreach mission and partnerships with a wide range of community services, including the Cancer Care Mission.

Timelines for the next step of the redevelopment project will not be determined until TCF completes its initial assessments and delivers a project plan.

Both Knox and the SACC are committed to proceeding with a plan that honours and protects the heritage aspects of the century-old church building while enlivening it with more modern usages.

Knox Presbyterian Church was originally built in 1871. A fire destroyed the front portion of the church in 1913, and so the sanctuary section is actually of newer construction, having been constructed post-fire. Architectural concepts will be developed and shared with both the City of Stratford and The Presbyterian Church in Canada for early conversations about the potential for the building. Project proponents are enthusiastic about the prospect for a collaboration that delivers new space and services for faith, arts and cultural pursuits.

# Ministry of Music in Campbellville

*By the Rev. Drew Jacques,  
St. David's Presbyterian Church  
in Campbellville, Ont.*

The sanctuary of St. David's Presbyterian Church in Campbellville, Ont., was built over 175 years ago and has phenomenal pre-amplification acoustics.

Very early on in my tenure, I said to Brad, the clerk of Session, "We need to get more music into the sanctuary, and not just on Sundays."

Within a couple of days of making that statement, the director of a newly formed professional choir called to ask about using the sanctuary for practice. We said "Sure!" They asked, "How much?" to which we replied, "Nothing, just come and fill the space with joyful music." They did, and the seed of an idea was planted.

As we move further into the world of digital ministry, we need to think "inside the box" and see the sanctuary as one of our greatest assets.

Back in "B.C." (Before COVID-19), we were thinking about organizing concerts and having a free-will offering to help fundraise and keep the boat afloat. Now, it seems that those days are gone, maybe not forever, but for a very long time.

As the pandemic unfolded, we noticed many musicians performing their music via "Quaranconcerts" live streamed on Facebook, Zoom or

YouTube.

The truth is musicians love to perform. The challenge is that venues have been shuttered. So why not establish a "Ministry of Music"?

The simple idea was to make the sanctuary available to musicians to come and perform, or practice their music in a big room. For free.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive. As a result, we are entering into an agreement with the choir to support and nurture young musicians. They have the talent, and St. David's has the facility. Win-win.

Musicians can perform "unplugged" or "plugged in" to the sound system of the sanctuary. In addition, St. David's has the capacity to digitally record the audio and upload videos of their "Quaranconcert" to our YouTube Channel. For free.

Our only request is that they mention St. David's online Sunday service and invite people to email us for the link to join our online worship.

The Ministry of Music is about being hospitable and inviting musicians to come and make the most of the sanctuary. The benefit to St. David's is doing something positive for a much larger community, while also having the opportunity to reach out and invite others to join in the "good vibrations" going on here.





## NEWS

# Creativity and Connection at MacNab Street PC



Christina McCarthy, Director of Children and Youth Ministry, MacNab Street Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., on a field trip to Niagara Falls.



The Rev. Steve Baldry makes a special appearance as a knight.

By Christina McCarthy, Director of Children and Youth Ministry, MacNab Street Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont.

Like everyone else, we at MacNab Street Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., found ourselves wondering how to minister to our children, and to the children of the community over the course of Summer 2020. MacNab had already shifted services online, and was offering a live, weekly story time via our Facebook page. We wanted to do something a bit more extensive over the summer. As a youth minister, I am a big fan of Vacation Bible School, but as a parent, I knew that providing engaging content online for long periods of time is very tricky. Enter the Rev. Steve Baldry, minister of MacNab Street Presbyterian Church.

Steve approached me with an idea that he just wanted to “throw out

there.” He asked what I would think of the possibility of partnering with his daughter, Kendalyn Mazur, who is the youth minister at The Crossing Church in St. John’s, N.L., and working together to create short, daily videos that would air through each church. It was a brilliant idea, and out of it, *Cross Country Kids* was born.

*Cross Country Kids* was designed to be an interdenominational program that was easily relatable for children regardless of their location, easily accessible for their parents and flexible in nature. It was delivered daily through July and August. Each week had a central theme, a memory verse, Bible lesson, snack, craft, special guest and an activity, such as a game or field trip. For example, Pirate Week was used to teach kids that our true treasure is found in knowing Jesus. Our memory verse was Matthew 6:21, and our special guest was “Captain Greed,” aka Da-

vid Milmine, MacNab’s clerk of Session. We made pizza treasure maps, hunted for treasures and played pirate games.

Daily videos were 15–20 minutes in length. MacNab aired the videos on our Facebook page for the general public, and a Google Classroom was created for members of both congregations. Segments including both churches were filmed via online Zoom meetings, and separate segments were filmed and edited by each church. The Crossing Church was fortunate to have two summer students, Rachael Currie and Jacob Ossinger, who also assisted with the creation of content and editing of videos.

It is safe to say that *Cross Country Kids* was a success on multiple levels. MacNab’s Facebook analytics showed that each video received an average of 80 views. Through this program, children were able to



Learning to sign a memory verse with Kendalyn Mazur and Richard Evelyn.

travel across the country to learn about a new province, learn to sign a memory verse in ASL, and meet members of their communities that they wouldn’t normally have access to, such as athletes and a television actor—all from the comfort of their own homes, and in a manner that was easy to fit into their family’s schedule.

The biggest success was how this program brought people together in an unprecedented time. Congregants from both churches were eager participants in guest segments for cooking, space exploration, story times,

learning about marine wildlife, etc. The fact that two churches of differing denominations, hundreds of kilometers apart, were able to come together to share talents, ideas and resources in an effort to minister to a segment of the church population that is often given second thought is remarkable.

Through *Cross Country Kids*, we were able to demonstrate the love of God to children in a new and exciting way, and what at first seemed like a very challenging time turned out to be a time of incredible blessing for everyone who participated.



Teaching a pirate (David Milmine) about the Bible.

## Food Pantry in Downtown Stouffville



By Jim Mason, St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont.

On Oct. 6, St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., took its love for its community to the streets of downtown Stouffville (or at least to the sidewalk) with the unveiling of a new Little Free Pantry on the front lawn of the church.

The congregation was well aware of food security issues in the community. Worshippers regularly donated items to the church’s donation bin for the local food bank, and people in need often asked for help at the church offices. A pantry was first considered two years ago when the congregation looked at plans to develop the empty lot St. James owns



next door.

COVID-19 pushed more Canadians into food insecurity. According to the York Region Food Network, in the first two months of the pandemic, food insecurity rates increased by 39 percent. That means one in seven Canadians is now facing food insecurity. This pushed St. James to take action. A contractor was sought in August to build the pantry. When that failed, St. James pushed on, and an appeal was made on Facebook.

That’s when the project took off. Scheil Lumber, the local Home Hardware franchise, offered to supply and



deliver the material needed to build the pantry—free of charge. A local family, the Dekkers, offered to build it—at no charge. Within two weeks, the Little Free Pantry was being installed on the church lawn by volunteers. As they worked, passersby stopped to ask how they could support the project. Amazing.

The mayor, ward councillor, and representatives from the local food bank and other service organizations, including Stouffville churches, attended the unveiling. The youth of the congregation filled the pantry with food donations. The hope is that



the pantry will manage itself—as items are taken, they will be replaced by residents in the community.

Want your own Little Free Pantry? Start here: [littlefreepantry.org](http://littlefreepantry.org). The website includes the plans, material list and cutting guide used by St. James Presbyterian Church. There are also photo galleries, shopping suggestions, tips on locating your site and maps showing existing pantries.



## NEWS

# Joint Community Initiative Yields Funds for Missions



HACA agreed to upload auction items using the website, 32auctions.com.

For four days in mid-July, a no-contact drop-off location for donated household items, home cooking, gift certificates, and gifts of time and expertise was buzzing with activity. The auction was widely advertised in the community, as well as during the announcement time in our virtual services. More than 300 items were donated, but having never done anything like this before, the joint teams wondered if this method of fundraising would work. Would

people bid? Would the expenses of advertising and website costs be covered?

To everyone's surprise, multiple bids were made on most items. The end result saw more than \$6,000 raised with our congregation receiving \$3,100. What a gift this was for our congregation. We were struggling to meet our obligations to Presbyterians Sharing and other mission ventures, so these funds were very much appreciated.

Would we recommend this means of fundraising to other churches? Absolutely! Our Outreach Team worked very hard, but made some meaningful connections with members in the community. Everyone appreciated the care taken to keep each other safe with no-contact protocols in place.

As Pat Meadows, our Outreach Team leader commented, "It was really nice to join with a community group that works in the little village of Harrington, where the Presbyterian church is located. The people were a pleasure to work with and to get to know better. There are talks of repeating this endeavour with HACA."

If you have a team willing and able to work together, with a few members versed in computer technology, there is no reason this method of fundraising should not result in positive results! Working together as the body of Christ is what the world needs now!

By the Rev. Carol Hamilton, Knox (Harrington) Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ont.

Like so many churches across Canada, none of us was ready or prepared for the drastic impact that COVID-19 would have on our ability to worship and our ability to meet our financial obligations. Fortunately for Knox (Harrington) Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ont., we are a small rural congregation with a solid base of support from local families.

As the first weeks of the pandemic progressed, our congregation began to provide services virtually and connections ceased to be face-to-face. But that did not stop our various teams from beginning to think outside the box and consider new ways to raise funds, since hosting church suppers and collecting funds at potluck luncheons following worship services were no longer possible.

In May 2020, members of the Harrington and Area Community Association (HACA) approached our congregation to see if we might be interested in participating in a joint initiative to raise funds. The proposal was to host a Celebrate Harrington Community Auction, and half the funds raised would be allocated to our congregation and the other half would be utilized by HACA. Our Outreach Team readily went into action, soliciting items from the congregation for the community auction.



Saturday Breakfast at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C.



By the St. Andrew's Breakfast team, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C.

On the second Saturday of May 2020, a few volunteers prepared and handed out a take-out breakfast to a dozen or so community members who came by the Courtney Street door of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C. This was not the usual St. Andrew's Breakfast.

Earlier that spring, when mandates for gatherings curtailed church services, and serving food in a large public setting was considered dangerous, Session decided that it was not possible to continue the church's 25-year tradition of serving a hearty breakfast to vulnerable community members. Even the large Community Centre services that had offered regular meals to the most vulnerable were sharply reduced as the needs of displaced persons grew visibly in the city.

Responding to a community need in 1996, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church was one of four downtown Victoria congregations that accepted the call to provide a hot breakfast for people in need. The Presbyterian church's organizers decided to seat guests at tables with proper place settings and cutlery to treat them with respect and dignity.

For almost 20 years, around 300

## Breakfast Program in Victoria

guests gathered in St. Andrew's Kirk Hall for a pancake-and-ham breakfast. Many commented on the respect they felt they received here. Between 2015 and 2016, the number of guests dropped significantly to roughly 160–180 due to changes in other meal location's services and other factors. The other three churches that had served Saturday breakfasts shifted their resources to the centralized Community Centre rather than hosting the breakfasts at their own church sites. St. Andrew's volunteers continued to serve guests in the usual manner of honouring each person as a valued member of this community.

Many devoted volunteers are required to operate the breakfast, beginning with a personal greeting at the door. Each guest was then escorted into Kirk Hall, where they were seated at well-appointed tables and offered coffee, tea and orange juice. Volunteers delivered a meal of pancakes and ham on heated plates and additional helpings were always available. People got to know one another. Many of the guests and volunteers have been coming together for many years.

Since the beginning, volunteers at St. Andrew's Breakfast have fostered a sense of community rather than simply administering a church outreach. Over the years, the various organizers recruited work colleagues and friends to help. Volunteers came together to serve alongside both current and former church members, young students from high school and university, and other community participants.

Dave was once a regular guest at the monthly meals. He lived in his van and appreciated the chance to sit down at a table with others to enjoy a meal. He was able to move into social housing in 2015, and that

move made a difference in his life. He began to volunteer and soon became a regular on the clean-up crew. During the past five years, Dave has regularly stacked plates and washed dishes in appreciation for a program that valued him personally during a rough period in his life.

Each member of the St. Andrew's Breakfast team finds a specific role in this ministry. A couple of church members regularly set up tables and get Kirk Hall ready on Friday afternoons before the Saturday event. The pastor seats guests at tables, while conversing with them and learning who wants to sit together, or needs an accessible corner spot. A long-time volunteer, Frank, is the master of perfectly flipped pancakes. Community volunteer, Kevin, cleans the washrooms following each breakfast. He suffered a heart attack in August and recently sent greetings that he was ready to return.

The faithful St. Andrew's Breakfast volunteers believe the meal is an essential service. They have responded to the new restrictions and reimagined what is possible with a workable new plan. Pancakes on heated plates have been replaced with scrambled eggs with ham and cheese and a muffin that can be served with fresh fruit at the door in recyclable containers. St. Andrew's organizers continue to serve each guest with dignity. Guests continue to comment on how they appreciate the respect shown to them and the hot meal dispersed with a kind word.

How will we move forward with the breakfast as the pandemic continues? As the weather changes and the needs continue to grow, volunteers are again learning how to adapt to every changing condition. "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" (Hebrews 13:16).



## NEWS

# Joy to the World Reimagined for Comox Valley

*By Jessie Schut, past convener of the Joy to the World Committee at Comox Valley Presbyterian Church on Vancouver Island, B.C.*

Like many other churches, Comox Valley Presbyterian Church (CVPC) on Vancouver Island, B.C., is an aging congregation. Our members are eager to be missional, but we are limited by diminishing energy.

In 2014, a number of members approached Session with an outreach idea that seemed suitable for our congregation. The idea was to host an exhibit of nativity sets from around the world and invite the community in to view them. Congregation members would loan sets for display, help with the set up and act as hosts and hostesses. We would call the event "Joy to the World."

Session approved the idea with enthusiasm and provided a small

budget. When the idea was presented to the congregation, enough people came forward to create a working committee to organize the event. We decided to invite seniors and those with mobility issues to come on a Friday afternoon for a viewing and tea. We also decided to have a children's craft area and provide live and recorded music.

The first Joy to the World exhibit was held on the weekend before Christmas in 2014. The event was publicized by posters around town and in an article that appeared on the front page of the local newspaper. We gathered 100 nativity sets from congregation members and from people in the community who had heard about the event and wanted to participate. We sent out invitations to local seniors' homes and residences. When we opened the doors to the community, we were overwhelmed



The Rev. Jenn Geddes and husband, Mike, in the dress-up room in 2018.



The Ghory family in the dress-up room in 2017.

by the response. More than 200 people attended and left glowing comments in the guest book.

Joy to the World has been held every year since then, and each year, something new has been added: a darkened display room for lighted sets, live music provided by many folk in the Comox Valley, scheduled classroom visits with a dress-up room to create live nativity scenes, a scavenger hunt, and special craft activities, such as decorating nativity cookies. One year, the local photography club came in and produced a beautiful four-minute video, which we have since used to publicize the event. About 500 people attended our 2019 event. CVPC has become known as the church that has the nativity display. We are so happy to be able to share the message of the first Christmas in such a beautiful way.

And now it is 2020, and we are preparing to celebrate Christmas amid a global pandemic. Given the circumstances, how can we host an

exhibit which might see hundreds of people coming through our doors in the span of two days? And yet, how can we not, when it is an event that has become such a valued part of the community? When our committee met in September, we faced these questions head-on. Although some of us came to the meeting resigned to cancelling the event, as we talked and shared our concerns, new ideas came to the surface. Surely this is what happens when two or three are gathered in Jesus' name!

What if we hosted this event in a smaller format over a longer period of time—even throughout Advent? What if we asked our visitors to make appointments to view the exhibit, and limited the number of people who could come at any one time? What if we created a one-way path, so that people entered at one door and exited at another? What if we cancelled the crafts, the senior's tea and the live music, but created a virtual recording to be posted on our website for those

who could not attend? What if we augmented this virtual visit with stories, a message from the pastor and music performed by members of our congregation? What if we prepared a kit of activities for the schools that had been attending our display, and for any other parents who had been bringing their children every year?

We are not sure, yet, which of these ideas is going to become reality. The virtual recording is doable, and perhaps in-person visits will also be possible. We know we have to be flexible in our thinking, prepared to change everything at a moment's notice. The pandemic is teaching us that nothing is set in stone, that change can be helpful, that we are here to serve our community in whatever way we can. We have learned to think outside the box, and to rely on the Spirit's guidance. Feel free to keep checking our website—cvpc.ca—for updates. We will post our digital version once it is completed.



The Comox Valley Presbyterian Church "Joy to the World" event in 2018.

## Outdoor House Church Gatherings in Uxbridge

*By the Rev. Sean Astop, St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont.*

For St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont., the spring of 2020 was to be a very busy time. Our casual and conversational Café Worship gatherings were ready to kick off a new season. A team of volunteers was set to start a Messy Church program for families in May, a Vacation Bible Camp was set for

July and plans for a Dinner Church were also in the works.

All of these plans came to a halt when the pandemic hit. Like many churches, we shifted our focus to embrace technology by live streaming services on YouTube, hosting coffee chats via Zoom and offering other programming for the church and community to engage with online. Yet our desire to gather in new ways and in new spaces wasn't put on hold.



Bev O'Hearn and the Rev. Sean Astop serving communion.



Barry and Lois Crane, Samira Gebhardt and the Rev. Sean Astop having a conversation.

When a church member offered to host an outdoor church gathering on her back veranda, we jumped at the invitation. The covered outdoor space allowed for us to meet in a

safe way. Initially, it was a simple gathering of leaders with the purpose of conversing, praying and discerning God's leading. Yet, a few weeks after starting, others joined and we

began a more intentional form of gathering that included communion.

We soon sensed God leading us to start considering the needs of sen-

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## NEWS

# New Westminster's Virtual Festival of the Arts



**"Laundry Day" painted by David McKnight.**

*By Carol McMeekin, Ron Peate and Judy Sinclair, KFA2020 organizing committee, Knox Presbyterian Church in New Westminster, B.C.*

Knox Presbyterian Church in New Westminster, B.C., held its second annual Arts Festival from August 22 to 29—virtually.

The idea for the festival originally arose from a Knox "Coffee and Conversation" Group discussion in 2019 about ways to enliven our church life and allow our spirits to soar. In-

spired, a group member suggested showcasing the variety of artistic talent within the congregation, and thus the "Knox Little Festival of the Arts" was born.

Held in August 2019, the first Knox Little Festival of the Arts was an entertaining and uplifting event that gave the congregation an opportunity to spread their artistic wings. There was dance, music, song, art, poetry and even some novel crafts. Dressed up in an Arts Café-style with small four-person tables covered with



**"Evening on the Fraser" photo taken by Slobodan Mitrovic.**

checked tablecloths and decorative menu/program centrepieces, the Church Hall played host to a variety of artistic works and performances. The art was both for show and for sale—thereby becoming a fundraising event as well.

Then along came 2020 and COVID-19. It looked like this year's festival could not happen, until one of the more tech-savvy members of our congregation proposed the logical and splendid idea of a "Knox Virtual Festival of the Arts." It was going to happen after all!

The call to artists went out, and the organizers were gratified by the enthusiastic response. Artists submitted their work to the festival in the form of text, images, video and audio recordings. We were able to celebrate the God-given talents of our members and the wider church community as they graced us with poetry, musical performances—both song and instrumental—paintings, videos, stories, photography, quilting, stained-glass and even culinary

arts. Several members created photo collages of nature, emphasizing the artistry of God, which were reworked into slideshows set to music.

Festival-goers visited the Knox Virtual Festival of the Arts 2020 via a virtual art gallery that let them enter a different "room" for each category of art. Clicking around the festival as they chose, they could enjoy all 45 works of art and 60 minutes of performance content at their leisure. Upon seeing it, our spirits were lifted and again our hearts took flight. A slideshow presentation of festival highlights can be found at [knoxnw.com/kfa2020](http://knoxnw.com/kfa2020).

The culmination of the week-long virtual festival was a live streamed celebration on August 29. The online get-together included a festival tour, additional vocal performances, and commentary from artists and viewers. After a consensus of positive comments, we were delighted that a mere pandemic could not deter another successful Knox Festival of the Arts!



**Emmaline Rathbun singing "Darryl is a Boy."**



**Stained-glass eagle by Garry (last name withheld).**

We thank God for the artistic skills given to us, and for the wonderful inspiration produced by music, song, art, dance, poetry, photography, architecture—all the arts. They build our spirits, nourish our souls and bring us even closer to God. Perhaps your congregation would like to organize an arts festival? From our experience, we can guarantee more than just a small fluttering of the wings. It can bring a congregation together, and perhaps even bring in others from the community who feel the joyful nourishment of spirit and soul.

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iors who may be feeling isolated and lonely. The next week, I received a call from one of our members about an idea to start a House Church gathering in the outdoor courtyard at her apartment building. This weekly gathering is a rich time of fellowship, and we are beginning to discern how God might be leading us further to care for lonely and isolated people.

The idea of gathering in houses—or, in our case, a variety of outdoor environments—for fellowship and worship God is not new. In the book



**A veranda conversation with Barry and Lois Crane, Samira Gebhardt and Betsy Convery.**

of Acts, Paul describes the early church gathering in private homes due to the persecution of Christians.



**Kathy Banks, Bev O'Hearn and Marjorie Lampman partaking in communion.**

There are many benefits that come with meeting together in smaller gatherings. There is increased inter-

action among those gathered, and we have experienced increasing trust and a deeper sense of community.

Going forward, St. Andrew's-Chalmers will continue to remain flexible and open to safe ways to gather. As the winter approaches, our outdoor gatherings may move to open-air garages or even covered parking areas with space heaters. While the pandemic has created many challenges for us, it has also reminded us of the importance to move forward with our mission of making disciples. In addition, we are experiencing the church, not as a building, a steeple or a resting place—but as God's people.



## NEWS

# Retirement of the Rev. Dr. Marion Barclay MacKay

By Charles Greaves, Bethel Presbyterian Church in Sydney, N.S.

On Oct. 15, members of the Presbytery of Cape Breton in N.S. and their guests gathered to recognize the Rev. Dr. Marion Barclay MacKay on her re-

tirement and give thanks for the many years of dedication to her ministry.

Marion is a graduate of Ewart College and the University of Toronto (1979) as well as the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia (1988). She was designated to the Order of Diaconal Ministries in May 1979 and served the Presbytery of Calgary-MacLeod in Alta. from June 1979 through October 1989 as the Presbytery Mission Worker, first under appointment through the Board of World Missions and then continuing on as the Presbytery Educational Consultant. From November 1989 through July



(Left to right) Carole Lovell, representative elder at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sydney Mines, N.S.; Donald Ferguson, guest; Robert Ferguson, previous representative elder for many years at St. Andrew's; and the Rev. Dr. Barclay MacKay.

1996, she served the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lethbridge, Alta., as its Director of Christian Education.

In 1997, she attended Knox College in Toronto, where she was recognized by her fellow students as the go-to person for advice and assistance. She served the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary from January 1997 through October 2005.

From 2006 through 2008, she and her late husband, the Rev. Dr. Donald W. MacKay, served with International Ministries in Ghana, West Africa, assisting the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in the development of its rather extensive lay training and catechist program, and continued to serve with International Ministries until January 2009.

In addition to serving on several national church committees, Marion was the first Canadian to serve as President for the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE), a multi-denominational network of Christian Educators in the Reformed Tradition in North America, and has been a workshop leader and speaker in Canada, the United States and Ghana. Marion later received an honorary doctorate from the Presbyterian College, Montreal, in 2016.

Since February 2009, Marion has served as minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Sydney Mines, N.S., until her retirement on November 1, 2020. Marion was elected moderator of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces in October 2019 and, due to COVID-19, will continue to serve until October 2021.



The Rev. Dr. Marion Barclay MacKay holding a picture of her husband, the Rev. Grant Johnston, who is ministering in Ontario and was unable to attend because of COVID-19 travel restrictions

As Marion enters retirement, she will have two very important responsibilities. She presently shares married life with the Rev. Grant Johnston who is also retired and is juggling life between Nova Scotia and his home in Brampton, Ont. Unfortunately, Grant was not able to be with us in person at our gathering because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, but was there in spirit as his picture was beside Marion.

We wish Marion all the best and assure her of our prayers and support as she heads out on this new path. We are sure she will continue to lead a busy life sharing her talents in the Lord's work.



The Rev. Ritchie Robinson, speaker at the event and convener of the Business Committee, the Rev. Dr. Marion Barclay MacKay and Charles Greaves, moderator of presbytery.

## REFLECTIONS

# Thinking about the End

By the Rev. Steve Filyk, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kamloops, B.C.

I had another birthday at the end of June. I turned 47, which means that 50 is on its way. In the last couple of years, I've been thinking about my own mortality. I know I'm not that old, but I do have a health condition that remains undiagnosed. And every few months, I hear about another person in their 40s who has died. This all starts me wondering: Will I be plucked from this world in the middle of my most productive years? Or will I live to see my children's children?

I went to the web to get some help with this question and I discovered a Canadian research group running an online health calculator ([projectbiglife.ca](http://projectbiglife.ca)). After filling out a survey on eating habits, exercise and weight, I found that despite my health concerns I've got the limber body of a 42-year-old and am projected to live to 86. Just to be clear, that is a 61% chance of living to 86. But what if I blow a stop

sign and get hit by a gravel truck? What if my heart decides to find a new rhythm while I'm out shooting hoops? Alternative endings abound.

And while I face other risks in life, there are added risks that threaten all of us. COVID-19 has reminded us that no one is an island. We all share life together. We are all affected by each other's decisions, and by events that are totally out of our hands. All to say that any life-span projections from [projectbiglife.ca](http://projectbiglife.ca) need a giant asterisk.

Humanity faces existential threats that we *might* be able to mitigate or diminish: global warming, subversive artificial intelligence and lethal pandemics. But we also face threats that are entirely out of our control: asteroids, earthquakes, wandering stars. Even the earth has a limited life span. In the BBC article, "How Long Will Life Survive on Planet Earth?", it is predicted that in five billion years, the sun will become a red giant. Add a couple billion years more and our ballooning sun will engulf the earth's



former orbit.

It would seem that there is an end to everything. Many of these endings aren't happy at all.

It is easy for me to get lost in anxiety and fears about the end of my life or the end of our planet. Will I spend my last days in a hospital ward hooked up to a ventilator? Will the mercury plummet as a new ice age begins, making challenges of COVID-19 look like a walk in the park? In the song, "The Future," Leonard Cohen croaks:

*Give me back the Berlin wall  
Give me Stalin and St. Paul  
I've seen the future, brother  
It is murder.*

When I worry about these menacing possibilities, I find it helpful to dig into another story, with a more hopeful

ending. I think about the last chapters of the last book of the Bible. In the book of Revelation, the writer shares a vision of the earth's future:

*I saw Heaven and earth new-created. Gone the first Heaven, gone the first earth, gone the sea. I saw Holy Jerusalem, new-created, descending resplendent out of Heaven, as ready for God as a bride for her husband. I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighbourhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone."*

(Rev. 21:1–5 from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson)

According to the Bible, God remains active in human lives and keeps a hand in global history. With God's involvement, it all ends well. Instead of everything wrapping up with the incineration of the earth, we are given a picture of a restored Eden. And for those who don't trust fairy tales, we are also provided a preview. Jesus' death and resurrection is the teaser for God's epic ending: heaven comes down to earth and death is undone.

This alternate ending makes me hopeful about the future. This alternate ending is more encouraging than a life-expectancy calculator that says I have an edge on some of my peers, and more encouraging than scientific calculations that project a long shelf-life for the earth.

While I have every expectation that I will die before the arrival of this God-given future, I am trusting that I will be caught up in it. I am also trusting that the care I show for myself, for others and for the earth will be part of the good things that are coming.

And so, I pray: "Help me, O God, to live as those who are prepared to die. And when my days here on earth are accomplished, enable me to die as those who are ready to live."



## REFLECTIONS



A memorial to a friend lost too soon.

# A Response to Grief

*By Vivian Ketchum, originating from Wauzbusk Onigum Nation of Northern Ontario and now a member of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man., and Life and Mission Agency Committee member*

My heart aches tonight. For a group of strangers that I have gotten to know over the past few weeks.

It began one evening when I felt the need to buy supper supplies for my neighbour in the next building to mine. He was a youth that I saw coming and going. An occasional greeting shared between us in passing. I didn't understand that strong urge to buy food for a total stranger, but I went to the store to buy the required food. I figured the answer would come in time.

The next evening, I saw the youth pacing back and forth in front of his place. The youth looked very upset as I headed over with the food that I bought for him. I knew about his friend who was stabbed outside his place. As I gave him the food, the youth told me his friend passed away that evening. I understood why I felt the need to buy the food. A way to help the troubled youth with his loss. We talked about what happened and how he was feeling.

That gift of food opened a door to a group of youth over the next couple of weeks. Youth involved in the system. Homeless youth. Involved in gangs. Troubled youth that had lost a dear friend of their circle. Youth that had little to no support with their grief.

My young neighbour who I gave the food to had set up a little memorial outside where his friend passed away. This was where the circle of youth came by to remember their friend. They didn't come in the daytime, but late at night. Out of the corners of darkness. That first night, I sat outside my back stairwell to try to comfort the youth that dropped by the memorial. I had food to share with them. One youth that was sitting by my back steps thought I was going to ask him to leave. I told him that I had a cup of hot soup for him and his girlfriend—which surprised him. This was very late at night and in a bad area of the city. I felt safe as I sat surrounded by my Smudge bowl and Bible. I had a bowl of Smudge going as I sat on the stairwell. The two youth asked if they could Smudge with me. I was glad to and was surprised when I was asked to say the Lord's Prayer. I prayed with them. Smudged with them. More came and stood by the memorial. I held one boy in my arms as he wept over the loss of his friend.

I felt totally safe. Protected. I comforted the little ones, as I now like to call those troubled youth. Even weeks later, I still talk to those youth as they come by the area. Oddly, I don't know their names, just the histories of their lives. So similar to my own story as a youth. My heart aches for them as they struggle to find their way with their grief. I am grateful for being able to help them in that first week.

## JUST WONDERING...



Submit your questions to  
[connection@presbyterian.ca](mailto:connection@presbyterian.ca)

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

### What do the letters "IHS" mean that are written on the hangings in front of the pulpit in our church?

Various explanations circulate about what the letters "IHS" mean. However, it is generally held that IHS is an abbreviation formed from the first three or first two letters and last letter of Jesus' name in Greek (Ιησοῦς / ΙΗΣΟΥΣ).

### My husband converted from being a Catholic to be a Christian when we got married. Why didn't the minister baptize him?

The Roman Catholic Church is a branch of the Christian church and its members are Christians. One of the gifts of the ecumenical movement through the history of the church is

that most churches recognize the baptism of other denominational traditions. When people choose to leave the branch of the church they grew up in and join another denomination, they are not normally baptized a second time because they have already been initiated into the household of God, joined to the body of Christ, the church, and united with Christ in his death and resurrection by virtue of their baptism.

### What quorum is required at meetings in the church?

Quorum is the minimum number of members of a body that must be present at any meeting for it to competently transact business and make decisions. The question has various answers.

Congregational meetings have no set number or percentage of members required to be present in order to proceed. Three members of the Board of Managers constitute a

quorum. The moderator and 25% of ruling elders on the Session, or two elders (whichever is greater), constitutes quorum for the Session. Quorum for a presbytery is defined as the moderator (or acting moderator) and two other members, one of whom is a minister. The General Assembly and synods have more complex ways of calculating quorum, which can be read about in the Book of Forms at [presbyterian.ca/gao](http://presbyterian.ca/gao).

Where no quorum is specified (e.g., in the case of most committees of congregations, presbyteries and the General Assembly), it means there is no minimum number of people required to be present in order to proceed. However, as in a choir—it is possible to sing with two or three people, but you miss the benefit of other voices. A committee may always decide to adjourn and meet again when more people can attend, if those who are present are concerned about the size of the gathering.

## PULPIT VACANCIES

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

**Fredericton, St. Andrew's** (full-time minister) – Atlantic Provinces

**Duncan, St. Andrew's** (full-time minister) – British Columbia

**Bramalea, North Bramalea** (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda (CNEOB)

**Kingston, St. John's & Seeley's Bay, Sand Hill** (full-time minister, 2-point charge) – CNEOB

**Kitchener, St. Andrew's** (full-time minister) – CNEOB

**Lakefield, St. Andrew's and Lakehurst, Knox** (60%-time minister) – CNEOB

**Madoc, St. Peter's** (full-time minister) – CNEOB

**Port Perry, St. John's** (40%-time minister) – CNEOB

**Scarborough, Guildwood Community** (full-time minister) – CNEOB

**Montreal, The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul** (full-time Associate Minister for Community Connections and Care) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario

**Fonthill, Kirk on the Hill** (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

**Kincardine, Knox** (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

**North Yarmouth, St. James** (part-time or student minister) – Southwestern Ontario

**Point Edward Presbyterian, Point Edward** (half-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

**Windsor, University Community Church** (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

**Woodstock, Knox** (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

## DEATH NOTICES

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

**The Rev. James Bruce Robertson**  
Wolfville, N.S.  
Deceased November 3, 2020

**The Rev. Young Tain Cho**  
Vancouver, B.C.  
Deceased October 19, 2020

**The Rev. Christine Shaw**  
Winnipeg, Man.  
Deceased October 18, 2020

**Margaret Ellen May Nutt**  
Toronto, Ont.  
Deceased October 14, 2020

**The Rev. Iris Ford**  
Parksville, B.C.  
Deceased September 28, 2020

**The Rev. Gerald Sarcen**  
Ottawa, Ont.  
Deceased September 27, 2020

**The Rev. Kenrick Keshwah**  
Scarborough, Ont.  
Deceased September 26, 2020

**The Rev. Dr. David Laurence Mawhinney**  
Lunenburg, N.S.  
Deceased September 15, 2020

**The Rev. Thomas G. Vais**  
Toronto, Ont.  
Deceased September 20, 2020

**The Rev. Dr. William James Adamson**  
Etobicoke, Ont.  
Deceased August 29, 2020

**The Rev. Andrew Turnbull**  
Barrie, Ont.  
Deceased July 22, 2020

**Beverly Ann Gellatly**  
Burlington, Ont.  
Deceased March 25, 2020



## CROSSWORD

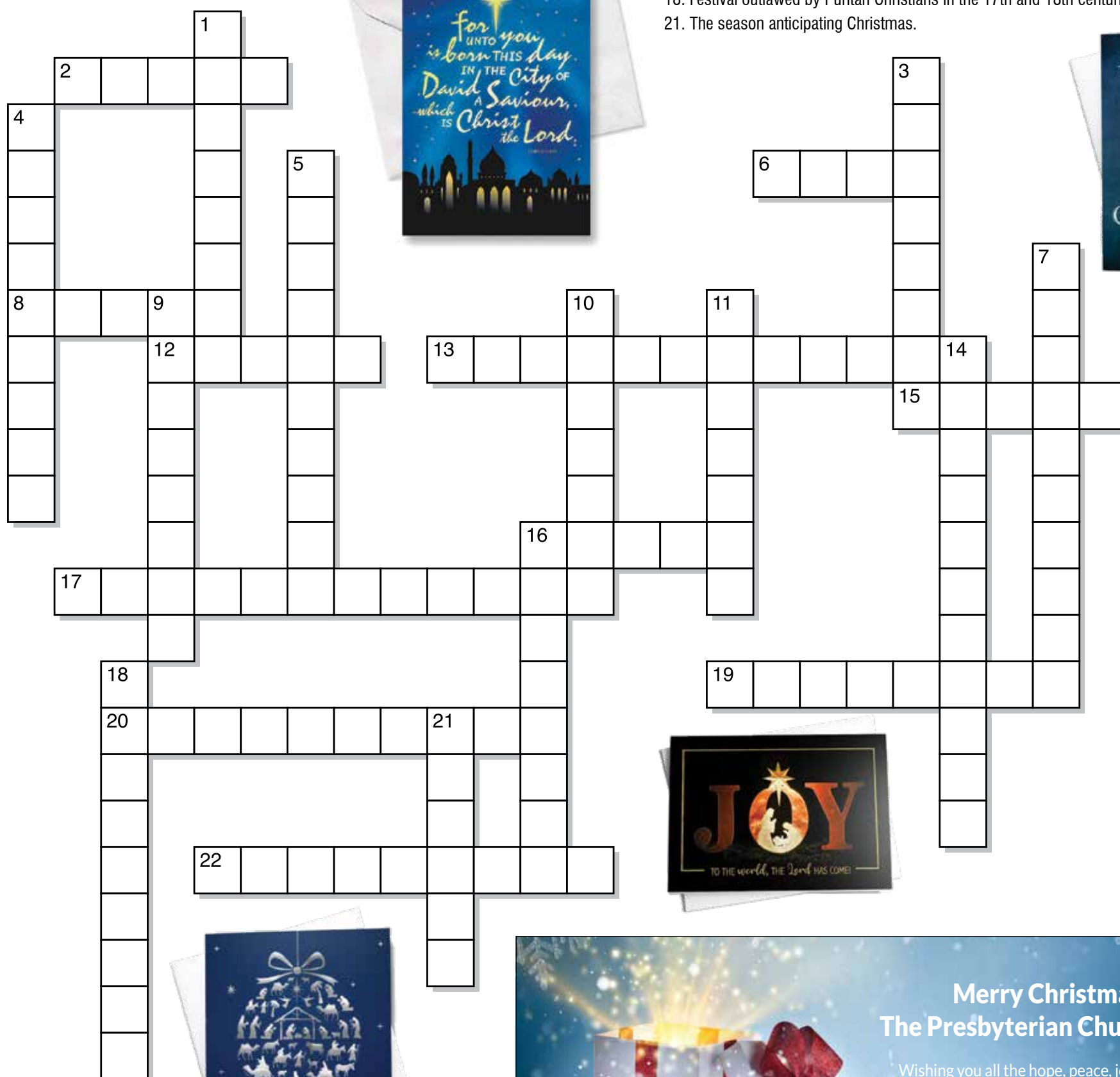
Test your knowledge with this edition's latest crossword puzzle.

### ACROSS

2. A Presbyterian minister's house.
6. Testified to the Light (John 1).
8. Coming from the Greek word meaning "messenger" or "envoy."
12. King's gift.
13. A fruit of the Spirit, "The quality of steadfast and committed belief."
15. Churches (Revelation 1:11), deadly sins.
16. A fruit of the Spirit, "A state of mutual harmony between people or groups."
17. Rearrange the letters in "best in prayer" to form this familiar word.
19. Caesar who decreed that the world should be registered.
20. To confirm officially.
22. Town in Judea where Jesus was born.

### DOWN

1. Highest court of the Presbyterian church: General \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A fruit of the Spirit, "Treating someone with benevolence and respect."
4. A relative of Mary who named her son John, contrary to the wishes of others.
5. A fruit of the Spirit, "The quality of being bountiful in giving."
7. They keep meetings and nuclear reactors from melting down.
9. God with us.
10. King Wenceslas and his page braved harsh winter weather to provide for those in need on the feast day of Saint \_\_\_\_\_, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7).
11. The 50th year in which liberty is proclaimed for all; do not sow or reap!
14. A fruit of the Spirit, "Restrained dignity."
16. A fruit of the Spirit, "Bearing with provocation; even-tempered diligence."
18. Festival outlawed by Puritan Christians in the 17th and 18th centuries.
21. The season anticipating Christmas.



### CROSSWORD ANSWERS

- DOWN**
21. ADVENT
  18. CHRISTMAS
  16. PATIENCE
  14. SELF CONTROL
  11. JUBILEE
  10. STEPHEN
  9. EMMANUEL
  7. MODERATORS
  5. GENEROSITY
  4. ELIZABETH
  3. KINDESS
  1. ASSEMBLY
- ACROSS**
22. BETHLEHEM
  20. HOMOLOGATE
  19. AUGUSTUS
  17. PRESBYTERIAN
  16. PEACE
  15. SEVEN
  13. FAITHFULNESS
  12. MYRRH
  8. ANGEL
  6. JOHN
  2. MANSE

