



Providing Sanctuary During a Pandemic



The Nest at Camp Kintail became a temporary women's shelter in the midst of a pandemic.

By the Rev. Theresa McDonald-Lee,
Co-Executive Director, Camp Kintail

Camp Kintail, located in Goderich, Ont., is usually a busy and lively place. School groups in the spring, campers in the summer, and retreat guests in the fall and winter ensure that the camp rings with laughter and activity the whole year long.

In the middle of March 2020, the camp fell silent as all our programs and groups were cancelled; like much of the country, Camp Kintail locked down. As we looked ahead, we wondered what sort of ministry could happen when the world had changed so drastically. Would we

be able to welcome campers and guests? Would Kintail's beautiful site sit empty for months?

A phone call from the Huron Women's Shelter answered our prayers and transformed our concerns into possibility. Even before the pandemic, the women's shelter had been full. So once COVID-19 struck, the shelter anticipated a rise in the need for more beds, as typically there is an increase in shelter use during times of emergency. They asked if the camp would be willing and able to house and feed the women and families currently under their care, so that more shelter beds could be freed

up for new arrivals seeking safety. We said yes. At a time when it was difficult to know what to do and how to help, other than stay home, it felt good to be able to meet a practical and real need in our community.

We spent a week getting ready. This meant posting new physical-distancing signage, adapting food service practices, deep cleaning, and creating welcome packages for our guests.

After a lot of coordination and many phone calls, the new guests moved into the Nest, Kintail's new year-round building that had been

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In a traditional year, Camp Kintail campers enjoy a rich camping experience. PHOTO CREDIT: HANNAH DICKIE

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Reflecting with the Psalms



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

In the midst of trouble, persecution or threat, the psalmists voice their complaints with the question, “How long, O Lord, how long?” As this issue of the *Presbyterian Connection* goes out, a whole year has passed since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020.

When we’d first begun the adjustments to our daily lives—things like working from home, online school, cancelled travel plans and virtual ways of doing church—most of us imagined it would be a matter of weeks. Church folk commented that Lent 2020 was “the Lentiest Lent we ever Lented,” and we looked forward to things getting back to normal by Easter. It would be a truly joyous celebration with everyone back together again!

As I wrote a reflection for the PCC website on March 14, 2020, based on the Sunday Psalms for Lent of Year A in the Lectionary, I knew that the church and the world would need to trust in God to make it through this crisis, but I had no idea how much or how long it would take. Indeed, we still don’t know how long this pandemic will continue to plague us with new variants emerging, limited success in flattening new waves and the slow roll-out of the vaccines.

But I would like to be like the psalmist who first voices a complaint, and then says to God (perhaps with an emotion-filled shake in the voice), “But I will trust in you.” So, I’ve selected some verses from the

Lectionary Psalms for Lent of Year B, as a way to look back on the difficulties, learnings and blessings of the past year. Perhaps some of my experience will resonate with yours.

Psalm 25:4–5: Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

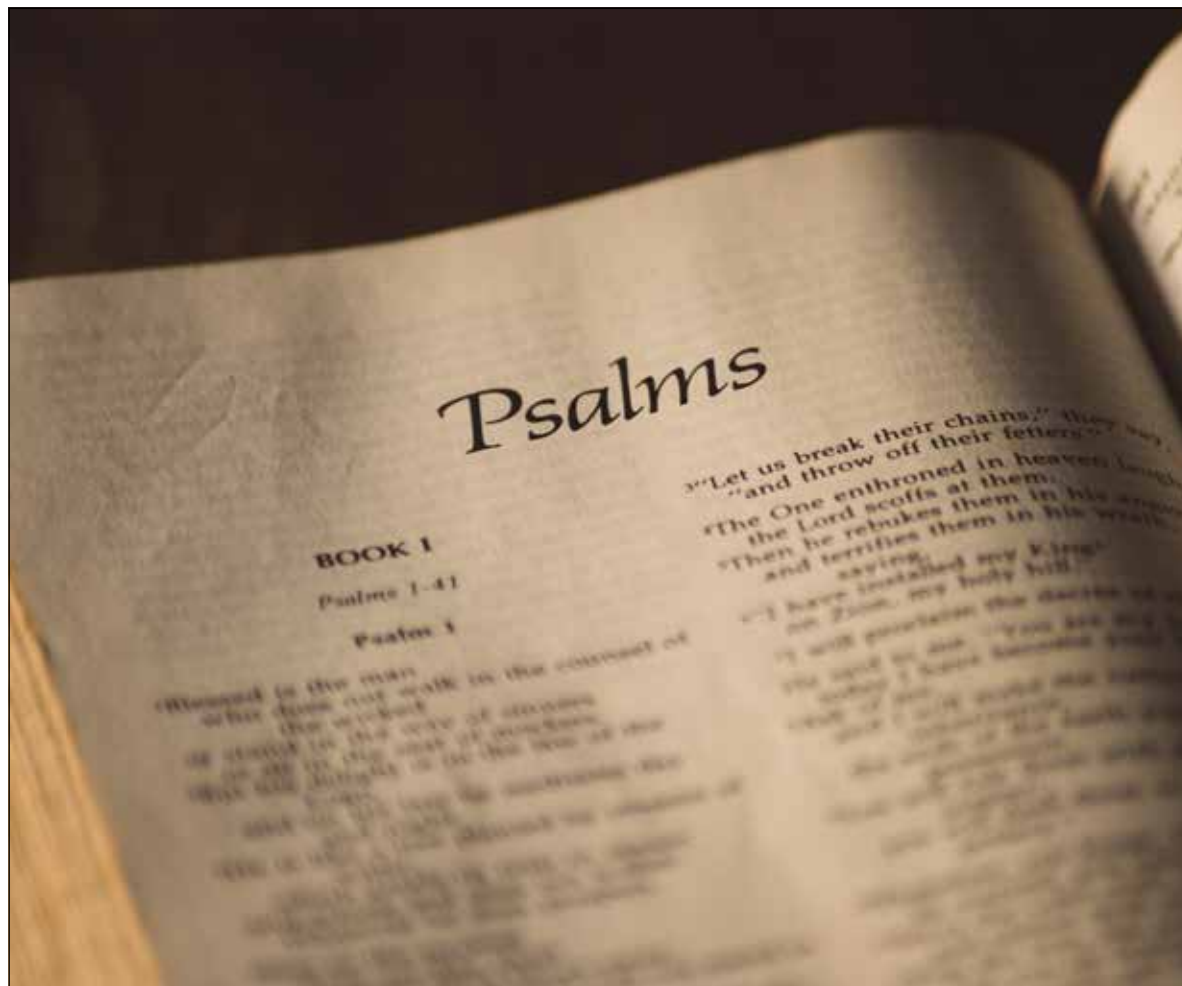
This year of pandemic has been a time of learning for me. I’ve learned new skills related to video conferencing, live-streaming and video editing. But more than just the practical skills, I’ve learned that authentic ministry can take place even online and still have a significant impact. I’ve learned to be courageous in jumping in and giving it a try and been happily surprised by what God could do among us in these new forums.

Psalm 22:27: All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

While I haven’t been able to travel in the last year, it has nonetheless been a year of connecting across Canada and growing awareness of the worldwide church. My little congregation in Regina has received visitors from Canada and around the world through our live-streamed services, and I’ve had the opportunity to preach in Presbyterian churches in Canada, Guyana and with the Canadian Council of Churches through video conferencing and pre-recorded videos. Even if we initially used the language of churches being “closed” because of the coronavirus, the pandemic restrictions could not stop all the families of the nations from turning to the Lord in the midst of the crisis and worshipping God.

Psalm 19:1: The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims God’s handiwork.

In a year without travel and without in-person events, I spent a lot of time on the computer (of course) but I also spent a lot of time outside. Making a commitment to walk and pray every day last summer not only gave me a way to connect with Presbyterians across the country and be unified with others in our prayers, but it also



prompted me to open my eyes and appreciate the beauty and wonder of God’s Creation. I live in the “land of living skies” that is Saskatchewan, and I was blessed by the scenery each day, whether I was walking in my neighbourhood or in one of the beautiful areas outside the city.

Psalm 31:9, 14, 15a: Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hand.

Last year was very difficult in many ways. In addition to the isolation and loneliness caused by the pandemic restrictions, there was the actual illness. For many months, I listened to the stories of those personally impacted and watched the numbers of infections and deaths with concern and sorrow. But eventually COVID-19 hit my community directly.

By January 2021, eight members of my congregation had tested positive—mostly folks either living or working in long-term care. One of our members died just before Christmas, less than two weeks after contracting the virus. We’re waiting until springtime to have her funeral as well as several other funerals for folks who died during the pandemic from other causes. It is challenging to keep going with that heavy load of sorrow and grief, but we are walking together as congregations, and trusting that God will sustain us through these days.

Psalm 107:1–3a: O give thanks to the LORD, for God is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Let

the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands.

We have not ceased to worship in this year of pandemic. Most in my congregation are worshipping with us online, and some are joining us who attended only rarely in person. Others are receiving sermons and services by mail so they can read, pray and reflect at home without the Internet. Although the world is struggling so much, God’s steadfast love remains, and we are giving thanks. Indeed, our awareness of our need for God seems to be prompting many to reach out for help and the strength to endure.

Psalm 51:6–7: You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

The pandemic has revealed a lot of difficult issues to be concerned about—not only that our health care system has limitations and that a viral pandemic has the power to exceed them, but that our society is plagued by inequalities that must be recognized, acknowledged and rectified. We might have predicted that Black and Indigenous people would be disproportionately affected by the pandemic. We should have known that our long-term care facilities would not be able to manage such an infectious disease effectively.

And yet, it has taken sweeping protests, persistent demonstrations and continual media attention to wake us up to the unjust systems

that we continue to empower. When the pandemic does finally come to an end, may we not simply return to business as usual, but continue the work of listening, repenting, responding and healing.

Psalm 118:24: This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

In a recent online gathering for prayer and support, one of my colleagues shared about the pandemic as a time when he has been learning to live in the moment. It made me realize that I’m not always very good at doing that.

My mind goes back to wonderful memories of pre-pandemic times—church suppers and celebrations, hugs shared between friends, gentle touches of comfort offered in crises, choristers and congregations singing side by side, access to patients in hospitals and long-term care homes. I also long for the future and the end of the pandemic. I imagine the possibilities for travel, and connection at gatherings, like summer camp—the way it is supposed to be.

But I am determined to see the good in each day even now—giving thanks for life, health, relationships and ministry that is enduring and even thriving in this time. This is the day that God has made! God is with me in it, and I am blessed when I open my eyes to see God’s presence and action here and now. I am grateful for the additional time I’ve been given to serve as moderator (even though it has been very different), and I’ll do my best to rejoice and be glad in each day as I continue to serve.

FEATURE

Continued from page 1

completed in 2018. It felt as if this building had been built for this moment, for this need. The Nest was able to comfortably house the women, and our staff were able to provide this sanctuary to those who needed it most. Every guest had a room of her own with a private bathroom. Our kitchen staff prepared three meals a day, along with plenty of coffee and snacks. Shelter staff were always available for support to the women and camp staff. And after a couple of days, the guests and staff had settled into a new routine.

The camp housed guests for over three months. During that time, regular overnight and day camps as well as the “Kintail on the Road” program were all cancelled. All our retreats and rental groups were cancelled. While we were making those sad decisions, we knew that ministry was still taking place and that the Camp Kintail site was being used to share God’s love and welcoming embrace. It was a real gift for the camp to continue to provide ministry in such a difficult time.

Even after our guests relocated to more permanent housing, our relationship with the shelter continued to grow. The Interim Executive Director had been travelling weekly to Goderich, and she stayed at Camp Kintail while she was working in the area. We hosted shelter staff meetings, as our space allowed for physical distancing and outdoor meetings, which their building was unable to do safely. Likewise, we hosted the annual meeting for the shelter on the Bluevale Deck of Harmony House (the camp’s original dining hall). The Huron Women’s Shelter, and two other shelters, have since hosted retreats and respite for their staff at Kintail. We hope that this relationship and partnership strengthens and grows in the years to come.

While this was a year of global calamity that we hope will never be repeated, gifts and graces still abounded. The Interim Executive Director of the Huron Women’s Shelter, Corey



Camp Kintail is a place to grow and learn on Lake Huron. PHOTO CREDITS: HANNAH DICKIE & CHRISTIN GILLARD

Allison, wrote, “I think it is a special partnership that happened, and reflects a spirit of radical love that’s needed to transform the world. I feel really strongly about the kindness and generosity we as an organiza-

tion (and our women) experienced at Kintail.”

During a time when it was difficult to know how to help, it was wonderful to be able to provide a peaceful and healing space, nourishing

food and Christian hospitality. The Nest became a home, a safe place to land, for women who needed it most. Camp Kintail was much quieter this year, but the ministry was just as life-giving.



MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

The Connection Keeps Connecting

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

Since the first edition of the *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper was printed in the spring of 2017, the distribution list has grown significantly. We now print nearly 17,500 copies for readers across the coun-

try. While the newspaper is for and about Presbyterians in Canada and our work with global partners, it has gained a growing readership beyond the PCC.

In addition to widening its audience, the newspaper has also more than doubled in length to accommodate the increasing number of submissions we receive about the

creative and faithful work being done in the PCC. Unfortunately, we can’t print everything we receive, but we do what we can to include a maximum number of items from denominational committees, colleges, missions and congregations across the country. We have taken a number of steps in this edition and in future publications of the

newspaper to maximize space for more stories from the church’s ministries and to present them in an integrated way that shows how connected our work is in service to the One who connects us.

If there are stories or topics you would like to see in the newspaper, please email me at imcdonald@presbyterian.ca.

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Moderator of the General Assembly:
The Rev. Amanda Currie



Presbyterians Sharing

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



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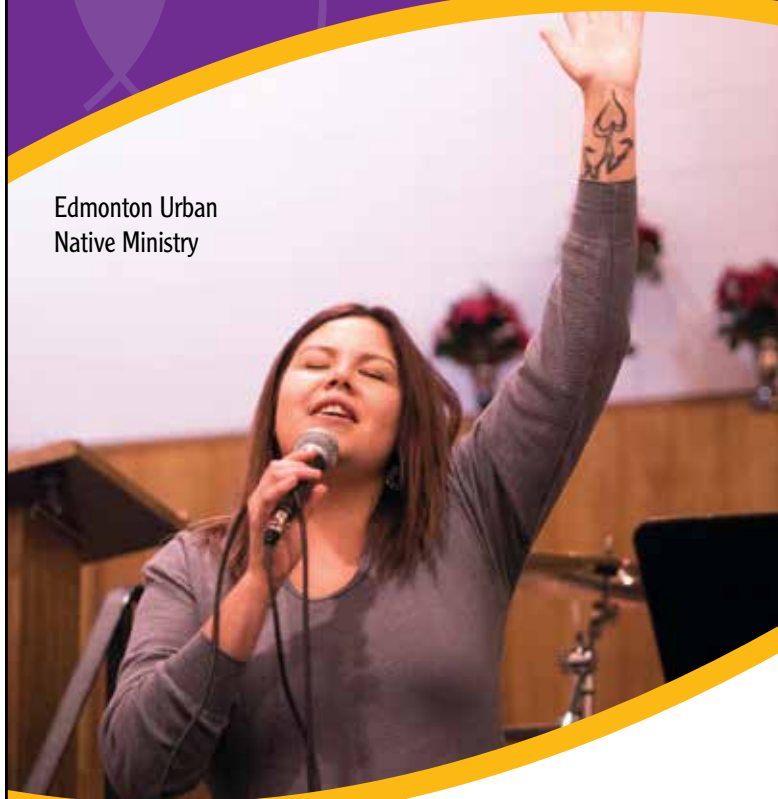
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PRESBYTERIANS SHARING

In God's Mission, Together

Thank you to everyone who supported Presbyterians Sharing this past year. Despite all the challenges surrounding COVID-19, over \$5.63 million was given to support The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Your gifts and prayers, with lower expenditures and support from the government, allowed us to support congregations and ministries in Canada, theological colleges, partners overseas, and more.



Presbyterians
Sharing

By Karen Plater,
Stewardship & Planned Giving

When I am asked what Presbyterians Sharing is about, I say that it's an opportunity for congregations to participate in God's mission together.

When we participate in God's mission together, we discover new ways to proclaim God's love, hope, faith and grace in our communities.

Last fall, during the four-week online Transform course, 150 people from over 60 different congregations and ministries explored what mission and ministry can look like. Participants shared their experiences and heard new ideas around adaptive change, transformational leadership, stewardship, good ministry practices and the power of storytelling.

The Rev. Joan Masterton of St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont., shared, "I learned that it is important to stay focused on putting God's mission first and foremost, and that sometimes we need to let go of something to become something new. It has me and my team considering practical ways our congregation might use lessons from the pandemic to adapt to longer term change."

When we participate in God's mission together, we support ministries beyond our communities with prayer, encouragement and funds.

Together, we are helping to revitalize congregations like Montreal West Presbyterian Church, which has shifted from a small homogeneous congregation to a vibrant multicultural community with a Sunday School of over 60 children. In Mississauga, Ont., The Well Church is ministering to the unique needs of second-generation immigrants. Using a house church model, Two Rivers Church in Guelph, Ont., serves people alienated from traditional congregations, and Cariboo Presbyterian Church in northern British Columbia connects people living in rural and remote areas. St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., is addressing poverty, and the Newcomer Mission at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Peterborough, Ont.,

is ministering to Arabic-speaking refugees and immigrants.

Together, we are supporting ministries that serve communities with unique needs. In Toronto, ARISE Ministry provides support and counselling to women involved in the sex trade. Living Waters Mission in Peterborough reaches out to people living on the margins of society, through its street ministry. Action Réfugiés Montréal helps refugee claimants held in detention centres navigate the claimant process and integrate into Canadian society. Life in Christ is helping newly arrived Arabic-speaking refugees and immigrants in Scarborough learn English and navigate life in Canada.

Together, we are supporting ministries with Indigenous people in communities across Canada. Place of Hope in Winnipeg, Man., and Mistawasis Memorial Church on the Mistawasis reserve in Saskatchewan are Indigenous congregations. Hummingbird Ministries promotes reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people around Richmond, B.C., through art, drama, dance, education and worship. Winnipeg Inner City Missions, Kenora Fellowship Centre, Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry and Edmonton Urban Native Ministry share Christ's love through a variety of programs, including meal provision, temporary housing, employment services, children/youth programs, Bible studies and worship.

Together, we are supporting over 50 international partners in 25 coun-

tries with grants and mission staff. We support theological education in Lebanon, Malawi, Ghana and Romania, and Bible translation in Taiwan, Nigeria and Mauritius. Partners like the Lay Training Centres (Tamale, Ramseyer and Nsaba) in Ghana, Theological Education by Extension in Malawi and the Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Mayas in Guatemala equip lay leaders with skills to lead Bible studies, teach Sunday Schools and minister to people in the community. The Christian Medical Association of India, New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Centre in Nepal and Ekwendeni Mission Hospital in Malawi all provide health care to vulnerable populations. With partners around the world, we are building a stronger church.

This is just a glimpse of some of the ministries proclaiming God's message of love, hope and peace with the support of Presbyterians Sharing.

Working together requires talking with and listening to one another, sometimes across language, cultural and generational divides. It can involve setting aside our own agendas and seeing God work in different ways through different people. This can require patience, humility, wisdom and times of prayerful stillness as we discern God's direction.

Learn more about Presbyterians Sharing in the colourful brochure inserted in this edition of the *Presbyterian Connection* newspaper.

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



LEADERSHIP



A Sweet Fundraiser

By Tristan Gerrie, Elder, Morningside-High Park Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

What started with a few loonies has grown into an annual fundraising campaign that has raised over \$20,000 in a decade for Morningside-High Park (MHP) Presbyterian Church in Toronto.

In 2011, MHP held a summer stewardship campaign called Seed-time to Harvest. Congregants were each given a loonie as their “seed money” and were challenged to “grow” their loonie over the summer months and then “harvest” the rewards in the autumn.

While trying to decide how to “plant” their “seed,” Blair, Patricia and Tristan Gerrie (elders at MHP) looked to one of their typical summer activities—preserving jars of

jam, jellies, soup, chutney and chili sauce. They pooled their loonies to purchase their first bag of sugar and package of pectin. Much of the fruit used in their jam comes from their cottage garden on Lake Huron. What they don’t grow, they purchase from local farmer’s markets or Mennonites nearby.

Blair and Patricia were amazed by the enthusiastic response to their sale. What excited them most was the opportunity to bring in funds from outside the congregation—extended family, friends and co-workers eagerly purchased jam and shared the order form with others.

After the success of the first year, the Gerries saw an opportunity to continue to support the ministry of MHP. The congregation had long planned to replace the outdated sound system at the church; how-

ever, unexpected costs and competing priorities from the operating budget made the project difficult to complete.

As a series of special fundraisers for the worship team, the Gerries continued to increase their jam sales, and they now sell over 1,000 jars annually. The whole family plays their part. Patricia is often searching for new and unique flavour combinations to create, and now makes over 40 varieties of jam, including Carrot Cake Jam and Peach Blush. In addition to tending to the berry bushes, a bumper crop of tomatoes led Blair to begin canning tomato soup to add to their inventory. Their son, Tristan—sales staff and red pepper jelly maker—encourages friends, co-workers and acquaintances to distribute the order forms far and wide.

The Gerries have always preserved fresh fruit. When they first married, a peach tree in their backyard provided the first fruit they preserved so they could enjoy peaches all year-round. Preserving became a treasured family tradition with grandparents and children joining the production line to help peel, stir and snack. Years later, the Gerries purchased a cottage on Lake Huron that had a number of red currant bushes. Unsure of what to do with them, Patricia began to experiment with jam making. Blair, an avid gardener, quickly began to plant more fruit—raspberries, black currants, blackberries, crabapples, gooseberries—all of which provided Patricia with more latitude to experiment. They enjoy and value the opportunity to give back to their community of faith by doing what they love.

During MHP’s 125th Anniversary, proceeds from the jam sales helped the congregation begin to install a new audio-visual system. Over the years, funds from the jam sales have been used to enhance existing resources and purchase new music and vibrant banners for the sanctuary.

Scottish Garden Jam Recipe *Makes 12–13 250 ml jars of jam*

Ingredients:

4 cups black currants
4 cups blackberries
3 cups raspberries
4 cups strawberries
9 cups white sugar
1 tbsp of butter

Method:

Sterilize jars, lids, funnel and tongs, and keep hot.

Put black currants in a large preserving pot and add 2/3 cup of water.

Bring to a boil and simmer until berries are almost soft (about 10 minutes). Stir constantly.

Add a tablespoon of butter to prevent excess foaming.

Add the rest of the fruit and simmer gently, stirring occasionally for approximately 10 minutes, or until fruit is turning soft.

Add sugar and stir over gentle heat until sugar is dissolved.

Bring to a boil and cook until setting point is reached, stirring constantly (about 24–30 minutes).

Setting point is reached when the mixture reaches 220°C.

Skim off foam and pour jam into sterilized jars and seal with warm sterilized lids.

The jam can take up to 24 hours to set. Store in a cool place. Refrigerate after opening.



The Rev. Janet Ryu-Chan, Patricia Gerrie and Donna Sullivan.

Colleague Covenant Group Grants

By the Rev. Tim Purvis, Associate Secretary, Ministry and Church Vocations

One of the most valued resources for self-care I used in congregational ministry was a weekly lectionary study group. It began with five colleagues who would gather on Tuesdays to discuss the scripture passages we were preaching on the following Sunday. Certainly, we all became better preachers by exchanging insights on the weekly texts over coffee and muffins. But as we got to know each other,

the group also became a place where we found mutual support and encouragement as we talked about the joys and struggles of ministry. Over time, we built trust and walls came down. In this safe space, we became more open and vulnerable. While ministry can be isolating at times, the collegial support we offered one another was a lifeline.

Ministry is a demanding and frequently solitary calling. Clergy can feel like Elijah hiding in the cave, thinking he was doing God’s work alone while facing overwhelming

odds (1 Kings 19:9–10). Feelings of isolation which occur in “normal” times have been compounded in the pandemic. Clergy report feeling physically and mentally depleted and experiencing exhaustion, burnout, depression and a sense of isolation. Collegial support helped keep clergy who use them grounded and whole during difficult times in their ministry.

To encourage ministers in developing this kind of mutual clergy support network, Colleague Covenant Group Grants are available through the denominational office. The program



provides a one-time grant of “seed money” to assist in the start-up of a new colleague covenant group. To qualify for funds, an application must be made that meets the criteria available on The Presbyterian Church in Canada website.

Full details of the program can be found at presbyterian.ca/ccgg or contact Liz Brewer (ebrewer@presbyterian.ca) or Tim Purvis (tpurvis@presbyterian.ca) in the Ministry and Church Vocations department.

LEADERSHIP

St. John's Piepers



The St. John's "Piepers" (pie-people) at the Presbyterian Church on 10th sideroad, Bradford has been making and selling turkey pies for over 20 years and recently donated \$2,000 to a church in Vanuatu from the meat pie sales. (Left-Right) Marie Wood, Helen Robson, Laurie Wood, Dianne & Jim Van Voorst, Leila & Edgar Lloyd

By Dianne Van Voorst, St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont.

In 1998, St. John's Presbyterian Church occupied the old church building at Church and John Streets in Bradford, Ont. The building required much work to bring it up to

code in the modern world. Our first project would be to put in a new kitchen. So my husband, Jim, and I decided to make some turkey pies for our annual meeting in 1999.

We were able to convince fellow members, Leila and Edgar Lloyd, that selling turkey pies might be the project that would raise the much-needed

funds for the new church kitchen. In April of 1999, the Van Voorsts and the Lloyds, along with Edgar's sister, Helen Robson, cooked one large turkey and made one batch of filling, which yielded 103 pies. Our first sale of pies gave us a net profit of \$2,160. We were on our way!

By October 2000, we cooked six turkeys for the first time to fill our pie orders, and our pie making group had expanded considerably. We made the pie filling in our church kitchen, then transported it to our farm where we were able to provide refrigeration to let it set overnight. The next morning, a dozen or so of us would get together in our farm dining room and put the pies together, sealing each one in a Ziplock bag and refrigerating them until they were picked up. This was a time of great fellowship and our turkey pie makers looked forward to our two-day monthly commitment.

We decided to call ourselves the Piepers (short for pie persons).

It wasn't long before we realized that our old church would be sold and we would be constructing a new sanctuary. Our group decided that our funds for turkey pies would be used to equip a new kitchen in our new building. We were able to supply \$38,333 for this, our first project.



The Piepers have been making turkey pies together for over 20 years at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford, Ont.

Other projects followed: tables for the hall, an outside storage shed, sound barriers in the hall, sound and video for the sanctuary, chair dollies, plate warmers, window replacement, door canopy, backdoor opener, new organ, new refrigerator, piano and various repairs.

In 2019, we celebrated our 20th anniversary of turkey pie making by paying for our whole Piepers crew to go on a bus tour of the Muskoka area, which included lunch and a boat cruise of the Muskoka River.

We have had tremendous suc-

cess selling our turkey pies. They are very popular with schoolteachers and nurses as they are a complete dinner with a soup or salad accompaniment.

Of course, this would not be possible without the commitment of so many people to the project. We now make in excess of 9,000 pies per year and have a challenge to keep up with our monthly orders. We have at least 20 people who show up monthly for our two-day pie making sessions, which is now done completely in our church building. We still have great fun and fellowship!

A Warming Space in Kenora

By Lisa Baker, Clerk of Session, First Presbyterian Church in Kenora, Ont.

First Presbyterian Church in Kenora, Ont., is a small congregation that has been without a pastor for two years.

A request came to Session prior to Christmas from several community groups asking to use the church hall as a "warming space" for those who would not have shelter in the winter months between the hours of 4 to 9 p.m., daily. Other spaces were being approached, but to no avail.

The Session learned that between the time the much-used Anamiewigummig Fellowship Centre closes at 4 p.m. and the Overnight Emergency Shelter opens at 9 p.m., there is a five-hour time period where there is no easy access to a toilet facility, warmth or food for those without a home. The seriousness of this inhumane gap increases as the temperatures plummet.

The plans presented to the church leadership included a fully managed patron-volunteer model, with in-depth COVID-19 safety protocols, run by local grassroots groups, Kenora Moving Forward and Spirituality Meets Homelessness, the latter having a First PC representative.

With the church hall not in use, the Session responded positively.

Preparations for the warming space included gaining the Northwestern Health Unit's approval of the space and setting up screening and safety protocols. Things moved along swiftly, and the space was up and running by Jan. 4, 2021. First Nations Elder Cathy Lindsey opened the space with prayer and drum. The space was named "Giizhowigamig," Oji-Cree for "Warming House."

Nee-chee Friendship Centre and Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'yewigamig Health Access Centre help fund an operating model that incorporates former patrons to become staff, who work with the volunteers to manage the space. The motto "nothing for us, without us" incorporates oversight that includes patron input and community circles. The project will take place each day through to April.

While there continues to be concern about the need for better intervention provided by the government, the immediate need remains, and the band-aid solution has brought local people and churches together.

We are looking forward to seeing how this endeavour will bring light to our community and widen relationships with those around us. Some volunteers initially did not even know of First Presbyterian Church, even though

the church building is located on the main thoroughfare of Kenora's downtown core. The local news heralded the humanitarian action taking place.

Up to 50 people are being served each day, on a rotational basis to keep with capacity restrictions of 15 people with staff.

Patrons using the space have expressed deep gratitude. One Indigenous woman, "Patricia," following a warm meal, stopped to express her thankfulness and added during the conversation that her father had helped build this church when he was 19 years old. When sharing with her that it would be an hour wait time before the Overnight Shelter opened, she replied, "That's okay...that's my prayer time while I wait in line."

Volunteering at the space is a worthy and humbling experience. Those who have been able to take up the challenge while wearing masks, gloves and other PPE when necessary, find it at times "an adjustment" amidst the reality of mental trauma and the effects of drug and alcohol abuse.

However, the mandatory need to screen all of the people in the space every day has provided another opportunity to welcome, engage and get to know each other. Interactions become all the more personal for

volunteers from the very first time they meet a patron and write down their first and last name as part of the screening process. When they leave the space for the night, they leave with the knowledge that the patron they served that evening (who they may have seen struggling on the street in the past) is named Carl. These caring interactions offer new mutual respect.

After communing with people who face even more struggle than not having a place to call home, it is certainly humbling to return to a cozy house and climb into a warm bed at night, knowing that the Shelter will not hold all of the patrons we'd met that evening.

As throughout the world, homelessness is a desperate concern among many, many people. Kenora has an especially high number of persons without shelter due to a variety of social, economic, demographic and historic tragedies that have heavily encompassed northwestern Ontario.

However, already more groups have reached out to find alternative ways to help continue to bridge the gap and learn new stories—bringing about a shift on the narrative of homelessness.

Your prayers for this effort are very much cherished as we seek Christ's will in his kingdom here in Kenora.



LEADERSHIP

Muskokans Embrace Unique Outdoor Space



The Rev. Glynis Faith delivered the blessing from the Beer Garden Stage in Torrance, Ont.

By the Communications Team,
Knox and Zion Presbyterian Churches
in Muskoka, Ont.

When the Government of Ontario said congregations could gather in person again this summer, the congregations of Knox and Zion Presbyterian Churches in Muskoka Lakes, Ont., joined together in a way no one would have expected before 2020.

They worshipped in a beer garden. It took just one phone call to Clear Lake Brewing Co. in Torrance to set a creative plan in action. The brewery

had built an outdoor stage, complete with plastic barriers, to allow for musicians to entertain outside patrons in its newly established Beer Garden.

In the small villages of Torrance and Port Carling in Muskoka Lakes Township, home to the Muskoka Lakes ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, there are few spaces—indoors or outdoors—that allow enough safe distance for a congregation, let alone two, to pray together. The Beer Garden, with its carefully spaced tables, fire pits and staging, along with few patrons on an early Sunday morning, provided the solution.

The first few services were held in September 2020. By Thanksgiving, there were over 40 people attending church outside the brewery, with people joining in from other congregations. They came with blankets, parkas, hats and gloves, and sleeping bags, all because it was worth the effort to join together as a community of worshippers to hear the Word of God spoken. Even as the days grew colder, services continued into November.

“What a joy to be allowed to sing, even in restricted form, and worship in person,” said Stan Hunter of Port Carling, who was one of a carefully spaced quartet that sang hymns on the stage for Thanksgiving. “It was an honour to be there with the Reverend Glynis Faith.” While the con-

gregation could not sing along, they did hum along, and expressed appreciation to hear their favourite hymns sung aloud.

Even the minister’s beagle, Skippy, came to church on those warm fall Sundays in Muskoka.

“Online worship services have been a blessing for keeping the church family connected, and our gathering together in nature brought joy to the hearts of God’s people,” said the Rev. Glynis Faith. “The management of Clear Lake Brewing provided us a place to connect in person, a gift for which we are grateful. Even if only for a few short months, the time we had encouraged us, and awakened our hope that, together, united in Christ, we will get through this.”

Innovation means something different to everyone, and churches tending their flocks during a pandemic are learning to embrace innovation in different ways. In Muskoka Lakes, not one adherent questioned the idea to gather in a beer garden.

“I think you could say we were humble, happy and unlike the beloved hymn, we did not come to the garden alone,” said Norah Fountain, who for 60 years has attended church in Torrance. “Rather, we came together, as if one, to praise God in that beer garden, secure in the knowledge that an approving Lord was smiling down on us.”



A group of safely spaced worshippers.



A large beer garden allowed congregations of Muskoka Lakes to worship safely together in fall 2020 for the first time since the pandemic hit.



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

A long time ago, in a land far, far away...a plug got pulled, a switch got thrown. We were shoved off the rails of the way we did things, tossed out of the “HMCS Predictable” into the storm of COVID-19.

It was sudden and there was no playbook.

Thankfully for St. David's Presbyterian Church in Campbellville, Ont., the Rev. Reuben St. Louis—minister at our neighbour church, Nassagaweya PC—threw us a life preserver by showing us the way to go digital.

When it dawned on us that this

Going Digital in Campbellville

was the best option to continue to gather and worship, questions arose: “What equipment do we need to pull this off?” and “How do we reformat the service to have a meaningful and relevant service digitally?”

We had an expert assess our technical needs. For a mere \$35,000, we could have a state-of-the-art studio to produce digital services.

That did not happen.

For nine months, we used an old laptop and an inexpensive camera and microphone to provide a time of worship online through Zoom. We learned to make do with a minimum of equipment. One of the lessons of COVID-19 is less is more.

In December, we were blessed with a bequest from the Wolfsi Estate that enabled us to buy a Macintosh desktop computer and a new laptop. They are all the tools we need.

As we got the hang of navigating this new terrain, a “Production Team” sprouted, with me leading online

worship in the sanctuary, Doug on the piano, and Brad and/or Staci at the Mac helm.

When we do return to worshipping in person, we will continue to produce digital services with worshippers present in the sanctuary. This is partly because of the “digital congregation” we’ve grown during this time. On any given Sunday, nearly a third of worshippers come from places miles away, including Northern Ontario, Alberta and Florida; once somebody from Jerusalem joined us for a funeral service.

Over time, we’ve pared and polished a time of worship that is comfortable and familiar, yet new and inspiring at the same time. The biggest struggle has been figuring out how to make “Children’s Time” work in an online setting. Back in “B.C.” (Before COVID-19), the young ones would come to the front of the sanctuary and we would essentially re-create, in a Christian manner, a version of Art

Linkletter’s *Kids Say the Darndest Things*. Without their living presence, it doesn’t work. We never considered playing cartoons or YouTube videos. The question was, “What can we do to enable their participation in worship?”

Then, the light bulb moment arrived. We realized that young people have, or have access to, digital devices. They know how to work them, and they want to use their devices to be part of the worship. So instead of “Children’s Time,” we have “Young Wisdom,” where we give one young person a prayer, poem, story or “script,” which they record and send to the Production Team for inclusion in the service. It’s a win-win situation. We get to see the young people in our congregation and they get to participate in worship. We’re mentoring storytellers!

Each week, the Pastoral Care Team mails a hard copy of the service to those of the congregation who do

not have digital access. The transition has had its challenges, but we’re making it work. As Staci says: #whateverittakes.

Having gone digital, we’ll get rid of the photocopier and switch our Internet provider to save some money. If you need a hand, please get in touch.



Doug, Brad and Staci of the Production Team at St. David's Presbyterian Church in Campbellville, Ont.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

General Assembly Moves Online in 2021

By the Rev. Stephen Kendall, Principal Clerk, General Assembly Office

The year 2020 was a year of struggle and change. It was also the first year in our history that the General Assembly was cancelled. The global pandemic has moved much of the life of the church online and, in 2021, this will also be the case with the General Assembly.

Following a survey of presbyteries about whether we should move online for a 2021 Assembly, hold an Assembly in-person as soon as possible, or delay by another year, the Assembly Council authorized an online General Assembly to be held during the dates of June 6–9, 2021. While the vaccine rollout carries much hope, the council could not, with confidence, recommend planning to meet in person this year, much as we would have liked to.

We will not be the first to hold an online General Assembly. Several

other denominations have already done so or are in the planning stages to do so.

The online Assembly will maintain many of the elements that take place in person. Commissioners will be responsible for the business of Assembly and its decisions. There will also be worship, ecumenical and interfaith guests, young adult and student representatives, and lots of breaks. The wider church will have the opportunity to follow the Assembly through live-streaming.

The General Assembly Office will work with the General Assembly Design Team on making the Assembly as meaningful and effective as possible under these new circumstances. Issues of how many hours we can reasonably meet, what business can and should be dealt with and how we can facilitate the participation of all commissioners are top of mind.

It will not be possible (and perhaps not advisable) to attempt to complete

all the business that has accumulated since the 2019 Assembly. As they always do, commissioners will determine how Assembly business is dealt with. They will decide what can be dealt with quickly by consent, what should be discussed as part of the online meeting and what should be deferred to a future Assembly. The General Assembly Office is working on a method to assist commissioners with that process.

Commissioners are ultimately responsible for the Assembly. They will need to authorize its very existence when it starts, decide on the business and approve any procedures that will be necessary to facilitate the online Assembly. For example, if there is a process to decide what business should be deferred, commissioners will need to agree to both the process and the matters to be deferred. While we will, of necessity, need to find new procedures to facilitate the Assembly, the Clerks of Assembly will strive to

ensure that all procedures conform with the principles of our polity as laid out in the Book of Forms.

PC-Biz (pc-biz.org), an online platform that has been in use successfully for 15 years within the Presbyterian Church (USA), will be used for presenting the reports and recommendations—and facilitating the business to commissioners in real time. PC-Biz also enables voting and tracking of all business. It will be customized for The Presbyterian Church in Canada and our decision-making processes. Staff from PC-Biz will train those who will facilitate the Assembly and every commissioner, so that all are sufficiently confident to fully participate. At the 2020 online General Assembly of the PC(USA), they found that only one of close to 600 commissioners was unable to manage the technology after the training.

The staff in the General Assembly Office are excited about serving the church in this new way and look

forward to working with a team of volunteers and staff to help the Assembly be a positive and memorable experience. As plans continue to develop and unfold, the Assembly website will be updated at presbyterian.ca/ga2021.



Presbyterians Sharing provides the funds for the General Assembly, the body that brings people together across the church to collaborate and set the strategic direction of the church's ministry.

What Does a General Assembly Commissioner Do?

June 2021 will mark the first time in the history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that the General Assembly will meet entirely online. This will necessitate some modifications as to how the Assembly is conducted, but the fundamentals remain unchanged. Ministers and elders from across Canada will still unite in worship and discernment and the decisions made will shape our denomination and help us fulfill the ministry to which we are called.

Before the Assembly, commissioners will receive reports from the various committees, councils and agencies. The more commissioners familiarize themselves with the reports, the more effectively they will be able to participate. During the Assembly, commissioners will be expected to attend every sederunt (sitting) of the Assembly. Reports will be presented. Some of them will have recommendations that call for decisions to be made, others will not. Ecumenical and interfaith guests will be invited to address the court. After the Assembly, presbyteries will invite commissioners to report on their Assembly experience. Your clerk of presbytery should let you know how to go about submitting your evaluation.

The church is blessed when commissioners, embracing God's inexhaustible love, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and discern the mind of Christ together.



Opening worship at the 2019 General Assembly.

Pre-Assembly Q&A Sessions

For the benefit of commissioners to the General Assembly, some committees will offer online Q&A sessions in advance of the Assembly's meetings. These gatherings will give commissioners an opportunity to meet some committee members, learn more about the content of the reports and ask questions about proposed recommendations. Details about the timing and format of the meetings can be found at presbyterian.ca/ga2021.



Young Adult Representatives at the 2019 General Assembly.



Commissioners vote at the 2019 General Assembly.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Ballot for Moderator

By the Communications Office

Three names will appear on the Ballot for Moderator of the 2021 General Assembly. The Committee to Advise with the Moderator will count the ballots on April 1, 2021.

The Rev. Paulette M. Brown

Born, baptized and raised in Jamaica, Paulette's faith formation occurred within the context of the church's struggles to be relevant, as new generations questioned the church's commitment to justice. During those times of questioning, Paulette's faith in Jesus Christ was nourished by prayers and the persistence of Christians working for justice.

Paulette, her three children and husband emigrated to Canada in 1983. University Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., became their home church, providing opportunities for their practice of faith. Responding to a call to ministry, Paulette attended Knox College and graduated in 1991.

Called as pastor to University Presbyterian Church in 1992, she served there for eight years. She led the congregation in developing the "Created for Life Youth Ministry," responding to violence and deaths among Black youth in communities served by the church. She received a YWCA Woman of Distinction Award for this church-community engagement.

From 2008 to 2014, Paulette served Gateway Community Church, leading the board in developing and implementing its vision of a mission to newcomer families.

Called to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Humber Heights, in 2014, Paulette supported the congregation in developing the Vision United Summer Camp, a mission responding to families' needs in Etobicoke. She brings gifts of prayer, discernment, fasting and study to support the congregation's revisioning.

Paulette has served the church locally and internationally. She has been a keynote speaker for the Presbyterian Women's Gathering, a gender consultant for the World Communion of Reformed Churches and a member of a writing team for Council of World Mission. Tasting firsthand the sufferings that result from the

church's failure to do justice, Paulette has learned a resilience that refuses to give up on God. Paulette is also a Ph.D. candidate in biblical studies.

Paulette brings passionate leadership to support the church's response to God's call to equitable relationships and reconciliation within its diverse body, even as it hammers out new ways of being the church.

The Rev. Mary Fontaine

Mary Fontaine (Cree), born and raised at Mistawasis Nêhiyawak, Sask., grew up in the Mistawasis Presbyterian Church. She is the founding director of Hummingbird Ministries, an Indigenous-led healing and reconciling ministry of the Presbytery of Westminster in British Columbia.

Mary's passion for healing is motivated by the suffering of Indigenous people. And her hope for the healing of the nations is inspired by her work with Indigenous children, her faith in the Great Physician and in Indigenous kinship spirituality.

Her faith was influenced by her mother, who loved Jesus Christ, her people and her culture. Mary's passion for justice was inspired by her father who made her aware of the suffering of Indigenous people, a reality affirmed academically through her B.A. in Native Studies. Her grandfather (a pipe carrier) modelled the inclusive All My Relations view of humanity and creation. She credits her spiritual parents for her own spiritual growth and an appreciation for the healing power of scripture. The Native Ministries program at the Vancouver School of Theology (VST) provided an opportunity to authenticate Indigenous Christianity through the integration of faith with Indigenous cultures.

Mary preached at the 2019 General Assembly and served on the Executive Committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches from 2010 to 2017. She participated in pre-COPPS22 in Morocco (2016) and was on a climate change panel responding to Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* in Vancouver (2015). Mary has chaired the Native Ministries Consortium at VST and the National Indigenous Ministries Council of The

Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Mary loves theatre and writing. She has a married daughter and two grandchildren. She keeps close ties with family in Mistawasis.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel D. Scott

Dan Scott is the minister at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford, Ont., and an associate professor at Tyndale University, where he previously served as Vice President and Academic Dean.

In 1987, his adventurous spirit took him to China where he taught English to academics first at Shanxi University, then at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. He joined the leadership team at the Shanghai International Fellowship. Upon returning to Canada in 1989, after the Tiananmen Square protests, he served on the pastoral staff at Knox Church in Toronto.

While at Knox College in 1995, he became the student minister at St. John's and hasn't left. At St. John's, which recently celebrated its 201st anniversary, Dan led the construction of a brand-new church facility (2004), with plans for an addition underway.

His leadership has connected the church to the wider community, through his involvement with programs, such as: special-needs camps; a twinning project between local schools and First Nations schools;

as the founder of the Bradford Ministerial; as a hockey and soccer coach; and by integrating community groups into the life of the church.

In 2018, The Elden opened in partnership with St. John's PC to create a \$54-million, 152-unit retirement home in response to a significant lack of housing for seniors in the community. The facility has partnered with Southlake Hospital to care for patients during COVID-19.

Dan has served as moderator of the Presbytery of Oak Ridges, as ecumenical observer on behalf of The Presbyterian Church in Canada to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Council of Presidents, as the Presbyterian representative on the Bereavement Authority of Ontario's faith-based Advisory Committee and in various other committee roles, including serving on the founding team of Stewards by Design.

At Tyndale University, Dan led the introduction of eight Honours B.A. programs, as well as the creation of a B.Ed. program certified by the Ontario College of Teachers. He also served as Managing Director of Save the Mothers, a maternal health non-governmental organization, and he has published multiple articles in a variety of publications.

For more information about the candidates for moderator and the 2021 General Assembly, visit presbyterian.ca/ga2021.



The Rev. Paulette M. Brown.



The Rev. Mary Fontaine.



The Rev. Dr. Daniel D. Scott.

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JUSTICE

Flags Present at the Assault on the U.S. Capitol

By Allyson Carr, Associate Secretary, Justice Ministries

On the morning of Jan. 6, 2021, one of several documents I had been preparing to work on was a reflective essay on the dangers of populism and nationalism. The reflection was structured on some aspects of the *Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation*, a subordinate standard of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that was drafted during and right after WWII. It is concerned with Christians' duties in the face of authoritarianism, tyranny and totalitarianism. *Church and Nation* was, after all, written by theologians who had witnessed the majority of the Christian church in Nazi Germany stand aside or even join the Nazis in genocide and total war.

The writers of *Church and Nation* wanted to guard against the church participating in, or standing aside for, such state-sanctioned violence should it happen in Canada. They wanted doctrinal statements to hold themselves and future generations to, so people would understand Christians cannot and must not align themselves with a totalizing power headed by any human or political party, no matter how charismatic, no matter the circumstances. The way

the writers drafted *Church and Nation* was, of course, framed by the larger context in which they wrote. But they had spotted a clear and serious danger to the faith, and wanted the ability to unambiguously say, "No. We can't, as Christians, support tyrannical power."

As someone who is both a citizen of Canada and the United States, all this was on my mind while I was working that morning. Though it was pressing, it also seemed distant; an abstract threat, not one metaphorically trying to break down my front door. But by afternoon, the abstraction and metaphor had both vanished. Watching nationalist, populist and racist insurrectionists storm the US Capitol building—meeting significantly smaller police, FBI and National Guard presence than the earlier and peaceful Black Lives Matters protestors had met—was something I had feared for months and now it was suddenly happening. I was not surprised, but I was in shock.

As I watched it unfold live on newsfeed, things I already knew deep in my heart were on visceral visual display. A particular—and vocal and powerful—segment of the Christian church placed their Christian identity behind this push for populist, nationalist and racist power. In addition to



The Christian flag flies beneath the flag of the United States of America.

the large Confederate flag a man who had forced his way into the building was carrying and the nooses hanging outside—violent racist threats that refer to a history of white mobs lynching Black people—I saw people carrying flags that displayed the cross, and one with the word "Jesus," storming the capitol building. I spotted another with "Jesus is My Savior, Trump is My President" try to breach the building. And within the Senate chamber itself, once the insurrectionists had forced the evacuation of the Senate—while it was in active session to confirm the results of the election—I saw the very same ecumenical Christian flag that stood in the corner of my classroom every day of my school life, from kindergarten through grade eight, waving in the hands of a man among those who forced their way in to seize and keep power. Four people died in the violence and a fifth, a police officer, died shortly after. At least two explosives had been found and dismantled in this attempt to overthrow the results of a free democratic election.

It cannot be ignored or minimized that, in addition to all the racist im-

ages and paraphernalia the mob was carrying, there were multiple (and large and prominent) flags with Christian imagery on them—one of them literally the ecumenical Christian flag that is supposed to stand for Christianity itself. This is not just a problem for the United States, or even just a problem for Canada insofar as we share a border and other ties with the United States. This is a violent cancer within Christianity that has aligned itself with white supremacy and with staying in power at all costs. This is *exactly* the kind of situation the writers of *Church and Nation* were worried about, and Christians cannot be silent about this.

It should go without saying that Jesus would not condone these actions. He would not align himself with a power that pursued policies that the Trump administration pursued. He would never align himself with racism and lynching nooses. That's not even a question; one cannot read the gospel accounts and come to any other conclusions. The Great Commandment is not "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your strength and hate

your neighbours."

So, although hundreds of years of history have tried to argue otherwise, it has never been—and still isn't now—a question of whether Jesus would condone this movement, these actions. It's a question of whether *we* will.

What happened on January 6 brought to a boil forces that have simmered both within and outside Christianity for many years. Those forces are not confined to the United States; they are here in Canada too, and all over the world. It was preventable, but it was not prevented—and there were public rallies in cities here in Canada in support of Trump, and all that his supporters stood—and stormed—for.

When we preach, when we worship, when we gather as community, what are we saying and doing, and what are we not saying and not doing? How do we encourage each other and build one another up? How do we stir one another to love and to do good works? If we can't answer these questions, we have serious soul searching to do.

The way to prevent violence like this is not to wait until it has come to a head, but to address it all along, each week, each day, speaking love, living love. It is through building each other up, which for some of us means letting our own privileges go. It is through listening and through repentance when we have committed wrongs, and through learning how to be community, how to be neighbours, that we begin to close the divide. That is what it takes in the long haul, and we need those measures, as so many people have been saying louder and better than me for so many years. But, given what happened, we also now need to ask ourselves: When a mob comes claiming the right to political power and violence in God's name, under the Christian banner, how will the wider church respond?



Talking about Climate Change

By Allyson Carr, Associate Secretary, Justice Ministries

Though much has changed in the world because of the pandemic there is one thing at least that has not—the need to protect the Earth and halt, insofar as we can, the effects of climate change. If anything, that need has become even more clear this past year, in part from the environmental improvements we see as a result of the reduction in commuting and travel. Much more

progress is needed, though, and knowing where to begin can be difficult, especially while balancing all the other pressing needs the pandemic has raised.

The impacts of climate change not only on ourselves but on future generations are profound. "Canada's Changing Climate" report, which was published by the federal government through Environment and Climate Change Canada in 2019, speaks about how Canada—and particularly Northern Canada—is

warming even faster than much of the rest of the world, which is already seeing significant climbs in overall temperature. The same report notes changes in freshwater availability, temperature extremes, and the likelihood of drought, floods and forest fires. Both an executive summary and the full report can be found online.

While it is very good to have that kind of data and summary at our fingertips, knowing the information is only the first step of what is needed

to head off irreversible damage. The next steps are figuring out how to act on it, and a vital part of those decisions is dialogue. But how does one have productive conversations about climate change, and what to do to mitigate it, when not everyone agrees on what is needed, and people have different levels of familiarity with the data that's available—as well as limited information about the options for action that are being proposed?

Continued on page 11

JUSTICE

Human Trafficking is Modern-Day Slavery

This article is drawn from the interim report of the International Affairs Committee to the 2020 General Assembly and draws attention to human trafficking. The report is online at presbyterian.ca/ga2020

In a February 2019 legal case that made national headlines, police in Simcoe County, Ont., rescued 49 Mexican migrant workers from a Barrie house who were being exploited by a cleaning company. Police reported an operation that brought men from Mexico with promises of work visas, education or permanent residency. Instead, the men were housed in squalid conditions and forced to work as cleaners in Collingwood, Innisfil, Oro-Medonte and Cornwall. The traffickers charged the men fees for accommodation and food, making their situation extremely dependent on those who were exploiting them.

Human trafficking, described by the United Nations as modern-day slavery, is the coerced exploitation of a human being for the profit of the perpetrators. Those who are exploited are not compensated fairly and are frequently forced to live under the control of their captor. Traf-

ficking can occur within a country or across international borders. Some of the forms of trafficking in Canada include forced labour in agricultural, construction or domestic work and sexual exploitation. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that in 2017 some 40 million people were trafficked, with 25 million people in forced labour situations. The ILO states that 1.2 million trafficking victims are children. Canadian police services reported 1,708 human trafficking incidences between 2009 and 2018. Estimates on the number of people in Canada in modern slavery conditions range from 6,000 to 17,000. Statistics Canada reports that 28% of all trafficking victims in Canada are children. The extent of these crimes is difficult to determine because of its hidden nature and the fear or inability of victims to come forward to law enforcement agencies or to seek other support.

A large part of the problem is that human traffickers target people who lack social and economic security and support. Vulnerable people include migrant workers or new immigrants, people who struggle with mental illness or addictions, people

who are street-involved, children in the care of social services, and people with disabilities.

The targeting of Indigenous girls and women for violence, including sex trafficking, is examined in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It is a harrowing, and yet essential, demasking of the connection between systemic racism and human trafficking that brutalizes girls and women. Indigenous people make up 4% of the country's population, but more than half of all sex trafficking victims in Canada are Indigenous.

The impacts of COVID-19 have further exacerbated conditions for vulnerable people. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime notes: "The increased levels of domestic violence reported in many countries is a worrying indicator for the living conditions of many trafficking victims... In an environment where priorities and actions are geared toward limiting the spread of the virus, it is easier for traffickers to hide their operations, making victims increasingly vulnerable." Technology that has connected families and communities in a time

when physical distancing is not only needed, but mandated, has also been used by human traffickers to host the sale of illegal images of trafficked persons and enabled users to pay money to abuse victims at a distance by logging onto live webcam websites and directing sex acts by those on view.

One essential part of combating human trafficking is to address the needs of trafficked victims for such things as food, shelter, education, employment and personal safety. The Government of Manitoba committed \$10 million a year to fund Tracia's Trust, named in memory of 14-year-old Tracia Owen, an Indigenous girl who was sexually exploited. Tracia's Trust supports victims of online exploitation and trafficking, and at-risk youth.

What else can we do? We can ask questions about the products and services we use. The CBC's Marketplace investigated allegations of human rights abuses in overseas factories producing PPE that are imported into Canada and used by Canadians, highlighting the need for watchfulness of our supply chains, even during the pandemic.

As a society, we can seek to address systemic injustices such as poverty, racism, barriers to accessing education and health services, and economic insecurity. Addressing these injustices will reduce the vulnerability of people who are targeted for human trafficking.

The Canadian Human Trafficking hotline runs 24-hours a day: 1-833-900-1010 and serves to connect survivors and victims with local support services in communities across Canada. Learn more about child trafficking from UNICEF at unicef.ca/en/child-trafficking. Learn about the Palermo Protocols (international agreements outlining ways to prevent, suppress and penalize human and other forms of trafficking) and the Government of Canada's National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking. The Canadian Council of Churches' Commission on Justice and Peace produced a study guide, *Human Trafficking in Canada: A Leadership and Learning Kit for Churches*, available at councilofchurches.ca. The Women's Missionary Society has a social justice study with a section on human trafficking at wmsppc.ca/wms-study (Social Justice Study 2).



Continued from page 10

One way to talk about these issues has been helpfully provided by *For the Love of Creation*. *For the Love of Creation* is a national initiative that brings together churches (the PCC among them) and other faith organizations or groups that are raising conversations and organizing advocacy around issues of ecological and climate justice. The initiative has several working groups that are engaged in producing resources and advocacy. One particular grouping of resources the initiative has produced is tool kits for having conversations about climate change in different contexts, among people with different levels of comfort and familiarity talking about it.

As I am writing, there are three conversation tool kits already available. The first kit, called "Creation, Climate and You" is aimed at helping people who are not used to talking about climate change in a group setting, or may be uncomfortable doing so and are looking to begin. The second, "From Concern to Action" is more aimed at those who have some familiarity with the topic but are unsure how best to engage or what to do now. The third guide, "Building a Better Future" is aimed at facilitating conversations where people are already involved in climate change actions and want to do more; it is focused on "enacting political and systemic change to ad-

dress the climate emergency."

These resources and others that will be posted later, such as a guide for exploring theology and climate justice, are available at fortheLoveof-creation.ca. There is also a letter there that the initiative penned to the government, calling for actions such as further reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, or work toward a "just transition" to a fair, inclusive and green economy. The PCC has our own collection of letters the church has written to the government on a range of issues, including climate change. Those letters can be found at presbyterian.ca/letters.

No matter your familiarity with talking about climate change or

knowing how to work together with others to mitigate it, there are resources available to help you. The need to act, and to act well, is vital; we need to work from love, to protect and safeguard the creation God called very good. We also need to act for the future of our children, and those generations yet to come—here, and all over the world.

For more information on some of the ways in which climate change is affecting the world, see "Climate Change and Food Security" on page 31.



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OF CREATION**



Through
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ecumenical and
interfaith partners
to advocate for
environmental care,
peace and
human rights.

HISTORY

The Presbyterian Church Archives

By Kim Arnold, Archivist/Records Administrator

"Of all our national assets, Archives are the most precious: they are the gift of one generation to another and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization."

—Arthur Doughty, *Dominion of Canada Archivist, 1904–1935*

Archival facilities are becoming better known because they have more recently been featured in popular movies and television shows. Cue the orchestra for music full of anticipation! An archives room can often be the place where the crucial "key" document is searched for and hopefully retrieved by the protagonist in order to solve a particular mystery—or provide much needed information to further the story.

Although maybe not quite as dramatic, this analogy fits quite nicely with the role served by the Presbyterian Church Archives.

How does one define "archives"? Archival records are primary source permanent documents that possess significant cultural, historical and/or evidentiary value—and are normally one-of-a-kind, unpublished items. The latter feature is what typically distinguishes an archive from a library.

The Presbyterian Church Archives is a specially designed, climate-controlled space located at the national church office in Toronto. It houses records of various media reflecting the extensive work of the national denomination through the decades. To this end, the Archives holds documentation from: congregations, all departments of the national office, presbyteries, synods, the Women's Missionary Society, the Atlantic Missionary Society, individual professional church workers and Presbyterian seminaries. Overall, these records date back to the year 1791 right through to present day. The media we hold consists of handwritten manuscripts, typescripts, two million



pages of microfilm, 2,700 architectural plans, over 35,000 photographs, film slides, glass slides, lantern slides and 800 audio-visual items. As well, for a number of years now, we have also been taking in records that are created in a digital format.

To put this into perspective, we house literally miles of records that would stretch from Toronto to Quebec City and back again to Ottawa! They are held in over 10,000 acid-free document boxes in our record storage area of the office. A stable climate, suitable for paper, photographs and film, is needed to help preserve the records with temperature and humidity control.

So how is this material managed and accessed? Once we accept a collection of records we then must arrange, catalogue/describe, label and correctly store them in acid-free containers so that we can effectively and efficiently access the material that is being requested by our researchers. We are a well-used resource and are available to the national church office staff, the church-at-large and the general public. On average, we receive 3,000 enquiries annually requesting assistance for specific information.

You can learn more about the Archives at presbyterianarchives.ca. Our aim for this web resource is to provide specific guidance to those who are church record keepers in the denomination, and to bring awareness to the

variety of records and topics we have on offer to general researchers. One of the areas of this site features web exhibits on topics that speak to the wide variety of subject matter found in the Archives—residential schools; Buxton Mission and slavery; Lillian Dickson, a missionary in Taiwan; ordination of women; and the life and ministry of one of our earliest ministers in Southern Ontario. Whether you are a congregational record keeper or someone simply interested in learning a bit more about the fascinating history of the denomination, you can pour yourself a cup of coffee, and while away some time browsing our website.

Within the pages of the documents and images in the photos located in the Archives you will find information on such topics as: immigration, settlement, social justice, residential schools, temperance, Christian education, worship, church development, Church Union, women's studies, ecumenical relations, Canadian and international missions, relief work, project development, issues of church and state—to name a few.

Because of this rich cache of available information, our patrons come from a wide swath of backgrounds—ecumenical representatives, professional historians, genealogists, theologues, journalists, novelists, artists, architects, musicologists, economists, university/college students and



The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, located at the national office in Toronto, circa 1999.

post-graduates.

At the time of writing, we are still sitting amidst the constraints of the pandemic. The Archives staff can receive phone calls (1-800-619-7301) and emails, but not in-person visits to the Archives. The Archives is staffed with two full-time employees, Kim Arnold, Archivist/Records Administrator (karnold@presbyterian.ca) and Bob Anger, Assistant Archivist (banger@presbyterian.ca). We are happy to assist you with any records-related enquiry that pertains to the church and its history.

The Presbyterian Church Archives serves as a denominational memory bank. It is here to preserve, protect and avail the rich documentary legacy that is in our care for the benefit of present and future generations.



Presbyterians
Sharing helps
connect Presbyterians
with their rich
history through the
Presbyterian Church
Archives.

Honouring Veterans in Charlottetown

By the Rev. Paula Hamilton, co-minister at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Since 1998, St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, P.E.I., has hosted an Honouring Our Veterans service and historical drama during Veterans' Week. Each year, Major Rev. Dr. Tom Hamilton combines his extensive knowledge of Canadian military history with the true story of a Canadian soldier, airman or sailor to produce a dramatization that recognizes and honours veterans. In the

historical drama, Padre Tom Hamilton portrayed Padre Laurence Wilmot, who served in the West Nova Scotia Regiment during the Second World War.

"It's essential for us to recognize the contribution of our veterans so that their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten," said Hamilton. "The drama is one way of bringing their stories to life so we will better understand what it was like for our veterans during times of war."

COVID-19 had a definite impact on the way St. Mark's was able to host



Major Rev. Dr. Tom Hamilton, portraying Padre Laurence Wilmot of the West Nova Scotia Regiment during WWII.

its Honouring Our Veterans service and drama for 2020. Normally, it is one morning service, but because restrictions limited the church to only 50 attendees per service, the church offered three different service times that people had to sign up for in advance. All three were full and others watched online. The blessing of the online service was that it reached people far and wide, receiving feedback from across Canada and from as far away as Ohio.

In addition to serving in team ministry with his wife, the Rev. Paula Hamilton, at the pastoral charge of St. Mark's and St. Columba, the Rev. Tom Hamilton is the senior chaplain of 36 Canadian Brigade Group and also serves as Padre to the Prince Edward Island Regiment, and to the Charlottetown Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

HISTORY

Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre



The new site of the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre (PCHC) in Carlisle United Church in the hamlet of Carlisle, Municipality of North Middlesex, Ont.

By the Presbyterian Church
Heritage Centre Committee

Since Sept. 29, 2002, the National Presbyterian Museum has been generously hosted in the lower level of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Toronto's Riverdale district. The National Presbyterian Museum was the first denominational facility of its kind in Canada. Since October of 2016, the Presbyterian Church Museum committee speculated that the con-

gregation of St. John's Presbyterian Church in Toronto would be planning to redevelop its 110-year-old building.

In 2017, a team went in search of a new home for the museum. It was not going to be easy to move 400 years' worth of artifacts as well as an outstanding collection of Communion tokens. In our search for a new location, the team visited many churches—some that were closed, and even some without heat or run-

ning water! Some building spaces were perfect...but out of our price range, and many basement areas were damp with mold and mildew. We even had an offer to move the entire museum to the east coast.

In January 2018, we visited Carlisle United Church, in the village of Carlisle, Ont., within the Municipality of North Middlesex and 20 minutes northwest of London, Ont. Since our first meeting we have developed a unique partnership with the hospitable members of this small rural congregation. The fact that the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre will be hosted by the former Falkirk Presbyterian Church (Falkirk being the original name of the village's post office) is good-naturedly acknowledged by members of the congregation and Advisory Committee.

Since that first meeting in Carlisle, the Advisory Committee under the umbrella of The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Committee on History has a new name: the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre (PCHC). Beginning February 2021, we have leased the upper-level sanctuary space in Carlisle United Church for our new Heritage Centre. The congregation of Carlisle United Church will continue to worship and has



Photos of the student work crew, supplied by St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church in Toronto, who worked for two weeks in July 2019 to help pack up the pictorial church plate collection and library of the National Presbyterian Museum.

generously agreed to meet in the church's lower level.

COVID-19 presented challenges as we packed up the old space and we hope to be able to open the new Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre early in 2023. We have extensive renovating to do in the new space. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has approved that we launch a campaign this year. Your financial support to the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre is necessary if we are to continue the legacy of the National Presbyterian Museum that welcomed individuals and group tours for over 16 years.

The National Presbyterian Museum closed in Toronto at the end of 2018. Thank you to our Curator, Ian Mason, for his diligence with the ongoing move and as well the set-up of our new space in the future.



Marilyn Repchuck, Convener of the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre Advisory Committee, is looking forward to announcing our future opening and dedication. Please visit us at pcheritagecentre.ca or contact us by email at pcheritagecentre@gmail.com.

We value the connection of history and heritage and offer a place for future generations to learn from the past. With your support, it will be possible for us to build for tomorrow.

Please plan to visit the new Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre when it opens.

Presbyterian history begins here... our heritage is our future.

Proclaiming the Good News on Church-less Sundays in 1918

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

The year 1918 was a dismal one for Canada. World War I, raging since 1914, had reached a fevered pitch as the Germans launched two major offensives trying to break through Allied lines. But the Allies held and by the end of September 1918, the Germans were back where they had been in March. The Allied leadership, in taking advantage of the German failure, launched counterstrikes in the late fall of 1918. All of this filled the headlines of Canadian newspapers, which also carried the names of the dead.

During the fall of 1918, different kinds of headlines joined the ones about the war, as the Spanish flu ravaged Canadians. The first wave of the

flu took place in the spring of 1918, with between 4,000 to 5,000 deaths in Canada. Then in the fall of 1918, a mutation of the influenza virus produced an extremely contagious and deadly form of the disease. As many as 45,000 Canadians died in this second wave, a disproportionate number of them being between 20 and 40 years of age. By the second half of October, cinemas and churches were closed to stop the spread. The lockdown was a patchwork quilt, with some regions closing only for a couple of weeks, and others for nearly two months. The longest shutdowns took place in the West. Winnipeg and Regina were still in shutdown when the war ended on Nov. 11, 1918.

Closing churches raised the question: How would ministers communicate with parishioners during this spiritually demanding time? Acting as

the Internet of the day, daily newspapers across the country opened their pages for ministers to publish short sermons, "sermonettes," in Saturday editions. As one newspaper put it, "A Churchless Sunday is not a Sermonless Sunday." The *Montreal Gazette*, on Monday, Oct. 28, 1918, commented that having a Sunday without church services meant the return to Standard Time, which occurred the previous day, "caused none of those inconveniences" that usually accompany the time change.

Not being able to meet together as Jesus' followers made the emotional burdens of late 1918 all the more difficult. The Rev. E. Leslie Pidgeon of Augustine Presbyterian Church, Winnipeg, wrote in the *Winnipeg Tribune* on Oct. 19, 1918:

"Many of us scarcely recognized how much the 'assembling of ourselves together' meant in our lives

until we have been compelled to experience a churchless Sabbath. We are learning in this strange way the meaning of the psalm our forebears sang, 'I joyed when to the house of God, Go up they said to me.'"

Being unable to attend church had parishioners recognizing what they were missing with churches being closed.

Clergy who did submit "sermonettes" discovered that writing a 400-word meditation was very different from preaching a 35-minute sermon. Not everyone was able to adjust well from spoken to written communication, from a context where length was celebrated to one where brevity enhanced the chances of a piece being read. The Rev. Wylie C. Clark of Knox Presbyterian Church, Saskatoon, was among those who learned to communicate effectively in limited print space. In the *Saskatoon Daily*



The Rev. Wylie C. Clark (ca. 1894), minister, Knox Presbyterian Church in Saskatoon, Sask., 1914-1925. PHOTO CREDIT: LH-2442, COURTESY OF SASKATOON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Star on Oct. 19, 1918, he wrote:

"Our dear ones have been exposed to the deadly missiles of war and now we at home are being attacked by the insistent germs of a noxious disease. Death lists have multiplied themselves. Sorrow and heaviness

HISTORY

Stellarton's George Monro Grant



Left to right: Stellarton Mayor Danny MacGillivray; Historian/Panel Designer John Ashton; the Rev. Charles MacPherson, First Presbyterian Church in Stellarton; and the Rev. Andrew MacDonald, First Presbyterian Church, New Glasgow.



Left to right: Central Nova Scotia MP Sean Fraser; New Glasgow Mayor Nancy Dicks; Pictou Centre M.L.A. Pat Dunn; Pictou Mayor Jim Ryan and his wife, Shawn.

By John Ashton, historical author and graphic/visual artist, living in Bridgeville, Pictou County, N.S.

A gathering of invited guests and interested observers recently assembled at a park in Stellarton, N.S., to honour one of its own locally born sons, with the unveiling of an interpretive panel for the Rev. George Monro Grant, Presbyterian minister, author, educator, political activist and nation builder.

The Rev. George Monro Grant was called "one of the most important non-political leaders of his times," and Canada's First Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald, called him a long-time friend.

The Rev. Charles MacPherson of First Presbyterian Church in Stellarton was the guest speaker and he began with an inspiring prayer and historical perspective of the life of the Rev. Grant, stating, "George Monro Grant

was a true pioneer in the areas of theological education, university development and mission, as well as having been a very strong force in the support of Confederation. Having laboured in small charges in Nova Scotia and P.E.I., and afterward being called to St. Matthew's Church in Halifax, he took up the principalship of Dalhousie University. During this time, Dalhousie saw a revival in its life. The University had lapsed, as he said, into 'a museum, post-office and lumber room!' He was instrumental in the Union of 1875 which formed The Presbyterian Church in Canada as we know it today."

George M. Grant had very humble beginnings in his birthplace of Albion Mines (Stellarton) in 1835. His parents, James and Mary Grant, had emigrated from Banffshire, Scotland, in 1826, taking farmland in the newly developed mining community that

would eventually become the proud town of Stellarton.

Grant's early days were passed on the little farm near the East River. This is where he acquired both the love of nature, and the practical ability to turn his hand to the need of the moment. He was reported to be very active and inquisitive. This curiosity would cause a life-changing moment for the eight-year-old "Wee Gordie."

The General Mining Association had just purchased a new hay cutter for the coal mine horses. And, as young lads are, George and several of his friends decided to test the operation of the new machine. Young George's job was to feed the straw into the harvester. Unfortunately, the machine clogged, and his right hand was severed just below the thumb. He convalesced for a year and his mind turned from the idea of an active life to one of study.

Speaking at the event, Stellarton's Mayor, Danny MacGillivray, stated, "As a community we are fortunate to be home to so many scholarly people who not only give back to the community, but bring their spirit and pride to other parts of the world. The Rev. George Monro Grant was known all over the English-speaking world for his tireless work."

George M. Grant enrolled at Pictou Academy, West River Seminary, and at the age of 18, sailed off to Scotland, where he would go on to attend the University of Glasgow. He was ordained in 1860, returned to Canada and placed in charge of missions in River John, Pictou County and Georgetown, P.E.I. His energy led parishioners to build churches. As the record states, St. George's Presbyterian Church in River John was named accordingly after the Rev. George Monro Grant.

In 1863, he was called to pastoral duties at St. Matthew's in Halifax. The Rev. Grant was effective in implementing typically evangelical solutions to the social problems of Halifax. He was involved in the direction of the School for the Blind, the Halifax School for the Deaf, the Halifax Industrial School, the Halifax Visiting Dispensary, the Young Men's Christian Association, and others. A major project during his ministry at St. Matthew's was the development of a theological school to train clergy in Halifax, which eventually became Pine Hill Divinity Hall.

In 1871, the Rev. Grant's strong beliefs in a united Canada led to his connection with Sir Sanford Fleming. Sir



Stellarton Mayor Danny MacGillivray and Councillor Simon Lewand at the Rev. George M. Grant panel unveiling.

John A. MacDonald was eager to connect all of Canada by rail. The Prime Minister hired engineer extraordinaire Sir Sanford to survey and suggest the best possible train route through the Rockies of Western Canada to British Columbia. The Rev. Grant was hired as the recording secretary for the expedition. The mission began with the Rev. Grant leaving Halifax and meeting up with the group in Toronto on July 1, 1871. The small party departed shortly thereafter and achieved its goal of reaching Victoria, B.C., on October 11, having travelled 5,300 miles: 1,000 by rail, 2,185 on horseback, 1,687 by steamer and 485 by canoe.

In 1873, the Rev. George M. Grant would produce one of Canada's best-selling works in Canadian history, *Ocean to Ocean*, a day-to-day journal of the hard voyage of the Sir Sanford Fleming Expedition. The Rev. Grant would publish several books throughout his career, including one of the first great tourism guides, *Picturesque Canada*.

The strong patriotism and pride that the Rev. Grant had for Canada would leave us with our national motto, "A mari usque ad mare," taken from Psalm 72, meaning "From Sea to Sea." It was his influence with Sir John A. MacDonald that this slogan was eventually adopted as our nation's slogan.

In 1877, the Rev. Grant was appointed Principal of Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., and over the next 25 years established Queen's as one of the most prestigious academic institutions in Canada.

In 1872, Grant married Jessie Lawson, who was the granddaughter of the first president of the Bank of Nova Scotia, William Lawson. Among their descendants was their grandson, the philosopher George Parkin Grant; their great-grandson, Michael Ignatieff, served as leader of the Official Opposition, during his term as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

The Rev. Grant died in 1902 and is buried in Catarqui Cemetery in Kingston, Ont. In 1937, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada named him as a Historic Person and a memorial plaque is located beside the interpretive panel.

"A Churchless Sunday is not a Sermon-less Sunday."

Continued from page 13

of heart have crossed many a threshold and the sword of anguish has been sheathed in human hopes. The doors of the house of the Lord have been closed and we are as wanderers outside the folds of faith. But we are not alone. The Lord is with us when we wait upon God. God brings us to the fountain head from which springs the pure streams of courage and strength. Either God will shield us from suffering or God will give us unfailing strength to bear it."

The following week, on Oct. 26, 1918, the Rev. Clark wrote in the *Saskatoon Daily Star*. Comparing three kinds of prisoners—prisoners of despair, prisoners of contentment and prisoners of hope—Clark noted:

"Prisoners of hope are alive with the throbbing life of home. No hardship can bring despair, and no shadowy happiness can produce contentment. The day of escape is coming. They will again set their feet on the homeward road and see once more the land of promise. Each morning as they rise, they exclaim: 'Shall it be today?' and each night they pray: 'God grant it shall be tomorrow.' These days we are in the prison land of war and disease and death, but we are prisoners of hope."

The pandemic of 1918–1919 and the pandemic of 2020–2021 have both forced ministers to use new forms to communicate the profound truth of God's presence with humanity in even the most difficult of times.



The Rev. Leslie Pidgeon, minister, Augustine Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, Man., 1916–1925. PHOTO CREDIT: ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

HISTORY

Ring the Peace Bell in Kincardine

By Bob Geddes and Mike Chreptyk,
Knox Presbyterian Church in
Kincardine, Ont.

Two years ago, on Nov. 11, 2018, Knox Presbyterian Church in Kincardine, Ont., participated in a remembrance event of community significance that has carried on to this day, despite pandemic restrictions.

On Nov. 11, 1918, bells rang out from churches across Canada to announce the end of World War I. Canada went into the war with a population of about eight million people; some 650,000 men and women served during the next four years at war. By the war's end, 66,000 Canadians had died and 172,000 had been wounded. What a price was paid in the name of peace and freedom.

On the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I in 2018, as part of the

Bells of Peace commemoration initiative endorsed by the Royal Canadian Legion, bells rang out across Canada once again—100 times. Knox Presbyterian Church in Kincardine joined in on the commemoration.

A year later, Knox continued this witness within the community with a short evening ceremony inside the church. The "Peace Bell" was rung 101 times. Veterans, school children and parishioners all took a turn. The sounding of the Bell was augmented with music performed by a local high school choir and two community bands. Many from the community took in the event. The early evening setting doesn't interfere with remembrance ceremonies earlier in the day, and it provides an appropriate and fitting way to close out the day by honouring the sacrifices of our military in the name of peace and freedom for



all Canadians.

Because of the pandemic, the Peace Bell ceremony for 2020 was simplified and held outside the church. Organ music was brought outside by speakers. Organist and choir leader Andy Fraser provided prelude and postlude music, along with the accompaniment for the singing of "O Canada" and verses of "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" by soloist John Low. In addition, there was a stirring rendition of "Highland Cathedral," with organ and bagpipes, also provided by Andy Fraser, with the help of the re-

cording capabilities of the church's newly digitized organ console.

The Peace Bell was rung 102 times. The service was presided over by a Colour Party from the Royal Canadian Legion, who stood on the front steps of the church. The breeze that day was blowing nicely for their flags. At the same time, video footage of gently swaying red poppies was projected on to the front of the church. The Rev. Bob Geddes, serving as interim moderator along with the Rev. Peggy Kinsman, closed the service with a prayer.



Members of the church and the community were appropriately distanced and masked, and stood on the sidewalks and lawn along the south and east sides of the church. Others drove by slowly. Technical duties were capably handled by Rick French, and the event was hosted and organized by elder Mike Chreptyk.

This unique remembrance ceremony is now part of a new, annual tradition for Knox Presbyterian Church, and has been warmly received by the community, who look forward to a 2021 version, whether it be indoors or outdoors.

Read more about events in Kincardine on p. 18.

OUTREACH

Sharing the Joy of Christmas in Victoria



Staff at Our Place receiving the Share the Joy of Christmas gift bags from St. Andrew's.

By Debra Verwey, St. Andrew's
Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C.

For several years, the members and adherents of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C., have supported a campaign called Share the Joy of Christmas every Advent season. The church coordinates the program with Our Place, an inner-city community centre that serves Greater Victoria's most vulnerable people, including those struggling with homelessness, mental health challenges and substance abuse issues, the working poor and the impoverished elderly.

During the months of November and December 2020, the people at St. Andrew's met the challenge to continue this charity campaign, in spite

of the obstacles that the pandemic raised.

The Mission and Outreach Committee began advertising in St. Andrew's monthly newsletter, *The Link*, at the beginning of October. In previous years, folks would make donations to Share the Joy in their offering envelopes during the weekly services. During Advent Sundays, members of the Mission and Outreach Committee would dress up as Christmas Elves and solicit donations at the Share the Joy of Christmas Store in the Kirk Hall during the post-service coffee hour. Needless to say, this was not possible during the strict COVID-19 lockdown, which started in British Columbia on November 19.

So, Plan B was put into action. St. Andrew's started a weekly email

update, *This Week at St. Andrew's*, which was sent to every person connected with the church. The Share the Joy campaign was highlighted in this email update frequently, with instructions that detailed how to donate using e-transfer, the Canada Helps app or regular Canada Post mail. The congregation was up to the challenge and contributed more than enough money to meet the campaign's costs.

Share the Joy of Christmas is a two-pronged program. We provide several turkeys to the kitchen at Our Place, where they are cooked to be part of a special Christmas meal for those in need in Victoria.

The second prong is giving gift bags to the 45 residents (15 women and 30 men this year) who live in rooms on the top three floors of the Our Place building. These folks are pulling their lives back together and are committed to working toward independent living. The Share the Joy gift bags are often the only items that the residents receive on Christmas morning.

Each bag includes a winter toque, lined gloves, at least two pairs of warm socks, toothpaste and a toothbrush, shampoo, hand cream, razors and shaving cream, soap, antiperspirant, a pocket calendar, pens and pencils, a paperback book, a puzzle or Sudoku book, Christmas treats such as chocolate bars and truffles, and a

Christmas card from St. Andrew's.

Two Committee members bought these items mostly during sales at Walmart and Shoppers Drug Mart to keep costs down. At one local store, Mountain Warehouse, three staff members were inspired to donate their staff discount to help make the purchase of the toques and gloves less expensive. They saved our campaign over \$500!

Twenty turkeys, over 10 kilograms each, were purchased from Fairfield Thrifty Foods and delivered free of charge to the kitchen at Our Place. Thrifty Foods also donated the sturdy reusable grocery bags that we used to hold the gifts for the residents.

Usually, the Sunday School children would help wrap some of the items included in our gift bags on the Sunday before the bags are delivered. With that not being possible this year, one of the Committee members, Patricia Shuckburgh, volunteered to wrap 90 presents (two for each resident; one with socks and the other with a toque and gloves for each person)! She also wrote a warm Christmas greeting in each Christmas card.

The gift bags were delivered on December 22 to Our Place staff member, Erin Gesner. Shortly afterwards, she sent an email of thanks to all at St. Andrew's for the joy and happiness that our gift bags gave to the 45 residents



Share the Joy Christmas gift bags were gathered for 45 residents of Our Place community centre.

as they opened their gifts.

In the past, the Christmas dinner at Our Place has several hundred people sitting down at once to enjoy their meal. Volunteers, politicians and other community representatives would be on hand to serve the meal. However, due to the restrictions, the dinner was served cafeteria-style this year with turkey, stuffing, gravy and all the other fixings, to feed the working poor, the homeless and those far from home, creating a time of community and warmth at this special time of the year.

The people who attend St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria carried on their grand tradition of Sharing the Joy of Christmas in 2020!

Bah, humbug on COVID-19!

RESOURCES

Welcome to the Garden

By Dr. Tori Smit, Regional Minister for Faith Formation for the Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

Come in, sit down and relax on the bright red park bench. It has been placed there just for you.

While you're here, take a few minutes to read and ponder some stories from scripture. You can then walk a labyrinth that invites you to reflect on Jesus' love. Or you can sing along with musicians, make something fun, learn something new, or try a recipe. This garden has all of these things ready for you to explore each week of Lent, and I am excited to invite you to come into the garden.

This winter, the Rev. Pressley Cox, Associate for Shared Mission and Ministry with Foothills Presbytery in South Carolina, and I began thinking about a Lent resource that we could develop for our churches. We had a few givens in mind when we started.

- We wanted the resource to be lectionary-based so people would be able to continue reflecting on these scriptures during the week following worship.
- It needed to be an at-home resource. Because most churches will be locked down this Lent, making an at-home resource a good choice. We also know that children's faith is best formed

when families share and practice their faith together at home.

- It would need to be suitable for all ages. From young children to older adults there should be something for everyone to find meaningful and enjoyable.
- It should engage all of the senses and offer a variety of avenues for learning, because everyone learns and grows in faith differently.
- It should be meaningful for different configurations on households. It would need to be designed for homes with young adults and perhaps only adults in them. It should also be for homes with one person and for homes with many people.
- Finally, knowing that church leaders and members are exhausted, we wanted it to be something that churches could simply upload to congregational websites or send in an email; we wanted it to be simple, easy and enhance their church's Lent offerings.

With this in mind we got started. I had created a few resources using a Google Classroom model for Sunday Schools and Advent this fall. Pressley was excited about this, so we started working with Google Slides to create virtual, interactive gardens that would be filled with stories and activities that people



could enter into with a click of their mouse.

If you are not familiar with Google Classroom, what you do is create a single slide with a variety of items that hint at opportunities to be explored. Then you link videos and documents to the individual items you have placed on the slide. In the Lent Gardens we created, a new window opens up with devotions for that week if you click on a book; if you click on the door, you are taken on a video tour of a labyrinth, and so on. One simple slide becomes the gateway to a wealth of activities.

To make our Lent Gardens come alive we needed people, and so we started asking people to participate. Everyone we asked said "Yes!" Daily devotions were written to draw peo-

ple into an overall biblical theme for each week. Musicians videoed themselves teaching hymns and songs. Church educators read stories from the children's Bible story books noted in the devotions. The staff at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre videoed a series of garden musings and created delicious recipes for each week. We developed simple crafts and video-toured labyrinths. In all, over 45 people contributed their talents freely and generously to the project.

Once everything was assembled, edited and uploaded to our six weekly Lent Gardens slides, we invited people to subscribe to receive the links for their church websites. Over 230 churches from Canada, the USA, the UK and Australia have received the slides so far.

As I write this article, Pressley and I are working on new slides for Holy Week and Easter Sunday. Once again there will be scriptures to read, stories to see and hear, a palm cross craft and another one featuring flower seeds. There will also be new songs to sing, a simple family meal, a guided meditation, and an at-home Tenebrae service for Good Friday. And then there will be reason to shout out our Hallelujahs on Easter morning with music, family prayers and a fish fry.

You can view two of these Lent Gardens and/or subscribe to the remaining gardens at cnob.org/?p=2153. If you'd like to receive the Holy Week slides for your church, follow the Synod of CNOB's website (cnob.org) for updates.

WOMEN

WMS Brockville Presbyterial Update



A November online meeting helped members connect with one another.

By the Rev. Marianne Emig Carr, Press Secretary, WMS Brockville Presbyterial

Like almost everything else, gather-

ing restrictions and lockdowns related to COVID-19 have put plans for presbyterial meetings on hold. But the Women's Missionary Society (WMS)

groups in the Brockville Presbyterial have been very ingenious in staying connected with members and serving in the name of Jesus.

The groups in the Brockville Presbyterial have been staying in touch with each other by phoning, emailing, and doing studies, meetings and worship services online (despite challenges with rural Internet speeds!). As well, the groups fundraise for presbyterial activities to support local mission and assist the Together We Can projects in support of Action Réfugiés Montréal and MIBE Graduate School for Nurses in India.

On a presbyterial level, a Thanksgiving newsletter was sent out. The Brockville Presbyterial President, Janet Jones, has been reaching out via phone and mail to WMS members

and individuals in the presbytery to encourage interest and involvement. The executive has also been considering possible ways to meet virtually in 2021.

Members of the Brockville Presbyterial participated in the national WMS Christmas service online in December. With the visioning support and encouragement of WMS Director Sarah Kim and the national Council Executive, the WMS Synodical of Eastern Ontario and Quebec is being revived, with new members volunteering to fill executive committee positions. Catherine Blatch of the Brockville Presbyterial has stepped forward to take on the role of Synodical President.

The WMS Brockville Presbyterial continues to find new ways to re-



The Mitten Tree: A WMS Christmas mission outreach in 2020.

spond to the command of our Lord to love and serve one another. The Presbyterial is looking forward to seeing where God will lead in 2021.

WOMEN

The Women's Missionary Society

By the WMS Executive

The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) has been a force in mission work for The Presbyterian Church in Canada for over 100 years. The WMS has gone through changes, but throughout the years we have endeavoured to keep our focus on Jesus' ministry to others.

In recent years, it has been become clearer that changes needed to be made. Council has been working on adjusting to the current times and needs. The *Glad Tidings* magazine has been discontinued and staff reductions have been made. We extend our heartfelt thanks to *Glad Tidings* Editor Colleen Wood and Program Coordinator Alexis McKeown for their years of excellent service with the WMS.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to adapt very quickly to the fact that council, synodical, presbyterial and auxiliary members could not meet face to face. We have met the challenge by becoming familiar with the Zoom online meeting plat-

form, allowing meetings at all levels with members and friends across Canada.

Here are some examples:

Our biennial council meeting was held online on June 25, 2020.

Synodicals and some presbyterials were able to hold their annual meetings, which had been cancelled in April and May 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The mission auxiliary of New St. James Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., hosted a Thanksgiving service online with members from other auxiliaries and friends.

West and East Toronto presbyterials hosted an online gathering with guest Becky Bauman who, with husband Dr. Nick Bauman and their family, represented the PCC in Nepal.

A WMS-wide online Christmas service was a highlight of the Council Executive with 138 participants.

How have members continued to reach out with so many limits on personal contact? Many resorted to reaching out through email messages, phone calls and cards/notes.

Others found unique ways. St. Paul's Mission Circle in Simcoe, Ont., organized some 30 Christmas gift bags, which were delivered to senior apartment residences.

To respond to individuals and groups who were not able to meet, and to foster fellowship among members and friends, the "Come Together" online series has been organized by the WMS Council Executive with the following upcoming dates and topics:

March 10 Come Together – World Day of Prayer
April 7 Come Together – Easter Worship
May 12 Come Together – Mission Awareness
June 16 Come Together – Fellowship and Sharing

To participate, please contact one of the following: Cathy Reid, President (reidc@rogers.com); Janet Brewer, Past President (janet.brewer@sympatico.ca); or Sarah Kim, Executive Director (skim@presbyterian.ca).

Finding Blessing in Diversity in Ottawa

By Dr. Laurentine Mouchingam Mefire

In November 2020, the regular Women's Breakfast at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., welcomed the Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine, the first Black woman elected to Parliament. Her participation reflected our retreat theme of "Finding Blessing in Diversity." Dr. Augustine is an emblematic and inspiring figure for Canadians at a time when Kamala Harris has become the first Black and first Asian woman Vice-President of the United States. Dr. Augustine has held many posts and received many honours, including her service as Minister of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women.

The conversation with Dr. Augustine was very rich and engaging. It mainly focused on:

1. Role models, inspiring hopes and passions: she revealed to us the women who have been her role models, who have inspired her and given her hope, including her grand-

mother who always encouraged her when she was still a little girl.

2. Black History Month: as the founder of this annual event, she walked us through the history of its creation and provided her thoughts on the potential benefits that the Black Lives Matter movement could bring to it.

3. Women in politics and leadership: based on her experiences at the federal cabinet table, it was easy to understand that women bring different thoughts and approaches to business and politics and contribute differently to political discussions. Whether to embrace a political career or not, she recommends that every woman, indeed every person, choose the cause they want to fight for and keep focus on their goal.

After announcing the donation by St. Andrew's to the George Brown College Jean Augustine Scholarship, the conversation ended with a prayer. We thanked God on how it had been a blessing for each member of the congregation to listen to Dr. Augustine, hoping that God will



Dr. Jean Augustine made a special presentation during a retreat for women of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa.

allow other opportunities for us to hear such inspiring people, and also hoping that God will allow members of the congregation to continue to come together to share experiences, to share ourselves, to share God's love; and finally hoping that God will help all members of the congregation to remember that they are the light of the world, and may this light continue to shine forever for God's glory.

A Presbyterian Trailblazer: Dr. Idara Edem

By Barb Summers, Associate Secretary, Communications Office



Dr. Idara Edem.

Dr. Idara Edem, a member of the Nigerian Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., is being recognized for an incredible accomplishment: becoming a neurosurgeon, which may possibly be a first for Black women in Canada. (Research seems to show this is an accomplishment Dr. Edem can lay claim to; the uncertainty is due to a lack of collected racial data on neurosurgeons.)

"The more important question is, why am I first?" Dr. Edem asked. "What are the structural barriers and systemic issues that have prevented others over the years from making this a goal?"

It seems clear that social and financial barriers in medical education, combined with a lack of representation from Black doctors, means many Black students often don't look at medicine as a viable career option, so they pursue other fields of study. Dr. Edem was one of only three Black students in her medical class at Queen's University.

"Mentorship and sponsorship are key at this time," she said. "Due to a lack of representation and support, many Black learners don't even get to the stage of applying for medical school."

Dr. Edem hopes more Black and female Canadians join her on the front

lines of health care. She believes in being a role model and hopes her story inspires others. She strives to encourage others by speaking to groups such as the Association of Black Aspiring Physicians, and mentoring colleagues who struggle with the unique challenges of being a Black and/or female surgeon.

"Twenty years down the line, I want to make sure neurosurgeons look more like the patient populations they represent—more diverse and more multicultural."

Dr. Edem immigrated to Canada when she was 13 years old. She has always been fascinated by the human brain. Once she realized what she wanted to do with her career, she refused to let barriers get in her way. She is now practising in Michigan but hopes to return to Canada as soon as she can.

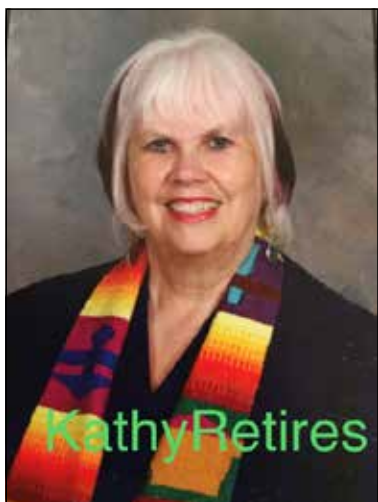
"Dr. Idara is always ready to help and encourage other young adults who look up to her as their role model. Dr. Idara believes in hard work, and for her, with God all things are possible.

As her pastor, building from my interactions and relationship with her, I know her to be a woman of faith who believes in the power of prayers and hard work. Anytime we interact she will say 'Reverend, please, remember me in your prayers.' This is so profound for a young professional woman in this era to always trust God. I am not surprised with her achievements. I pray and hope that she will excel in her profession and continue to be a blessing to the church, her family and humanity."

—The Rev. Augustus Oku is a First Missionary from the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria to The Presbyterian Church in Canada, as well as the Founding Minister and First Minister of the Nigerian Presbyterian Church in Toronto. He currently serves as coordinator of Spiritual Health Therapy and Education at the William Osler Health System facility of Etobicoke General Hospital.

RECOGNITION

Marking a Retirement at Kincardine



By Barb Stuart, Elder, Knox Presbyterian Church in Kincardine, Ont.

The year 2020 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Kincardine, Ont., started with the announcement that our inspiring and beloved Minister of Word and Sacrament, the Rev. Kathy Fraser, would retire at the end of February. The Rev. Kathy preached her last service on Feb. 23, 2020, with a full sanctuary of well-wishers, including her family, visitors from her former congregations and many friends. It was a wonderful way to celebrate her new life in retirement.

The Presbytery of Grey-Bruce-Maitland appointed co-interim moderators, the Reverends Bob Geddes and Peggy Kinsman. Little did they know when they accepted the positions that only two in-person worship services would take place before the COVID-19 lockdown started.

Within two weeks, online services were filmed and made available on

our YouTube channel. Not only did the co-interim moderators show their flexibility and determination, but also a cast of willing musicians and production people put forth their best efforts to make the services happen. The congregation at Knox, Kincardine, is grateful for the hard work of all these people!

While the weather was warm, we had some small group activities such as walking the labyrinth in the peace garden at one of our local parks. In September, we celebrated the ministry of the Rev. Fraser with an afternoon gathering on the front lawn of the church. Although this was a very pared down version of the retirement party that had been originally planned for May, it was a celebration nonetheless and enjoyed by all who attended.

Through online Session and Board of Managers meetings, the work of the congregation continues. We raised over \$14,000 to buy seed for grandmothers in Malawi. Wanting to put some “fun” back in fundraising, a virtual bazaar was held in November. For the last two weeks of Advent, our music leader, Andy Fraser, played Christmas carols on the organ and amplified the music outside for people to hear as they passed by the church. During the last few months of 2020, volunteers from the congregation updated and painted the manse in preparation to welcome our next minister. We look forward to the time when we can worship together and resume interactive events in the community.

Read more about events in Kincardine on p. 15.



The Rev. Kathy Fraser retired from Knox Presbyterian Church in Kincardine, Ont., in February 2020. PHOTO CREDIT: MIKE CHREPTYK



The retirement of the Rev. Dr. Peter Coutts, minister of Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., and his wife, Sheri.

Retirement of the Rev. Dr. Peter Coutts in Calgary

By Cathy Gale, Elder, Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

So much has changed with pandemic life, and even a year into it, some occasions remain daunting... “How do we do this in a pandemic?!” Many such times are the marker moments of life, meaningful for the change and transitions they bring us as individuals, and for those who care for us. They are opportunities for spiritual growth, and, in the best of circumstances, are celebrations.

For the last three and a half years, Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church (VAPC) in Calgary, Alta., has been blessed to have the Rev. Dr. Peter Coutts as our minister. We knew it would be a brief ministry, as he shared his retirement plans with us early on, but still, it snuck up on us, and the pandemic sure didn't help. The question became twofold: how to celebrate Peter's long, rich, ministry, while showing our gratitude for our time together? And how to do this when we can't be together? Recognition and gratitude for the fruitful ministry was the easy part!

Seeds for Peter's life in ministry were planted through the faithful example of his mother, key family friends in youth, and time in nature, at camps and at sea. Naval service on the west coast preceded his education at Knox College, and on graduation in 1987, Peter was once again called west, with wife Sheri, to his first charge at Saanich Peninsula PC as founding minister. Subsequent calls took him to Oakridge Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., and St. Andrew's in Calgary. At both of these churches, Peter guided and oversaw building projects, as he had at Saanich.

Growing interest in organizational leadership and preparing churches for change led to Peter's doctoral studies at McCormick Seminary in

Chicago. Out of this passion, his book *Choosing Change* was written; it spawned further work as a consultant and workshop leader for congregations and organizations across Canada and the U.S. Leaving his call at St. Andrew's in 2013, to begin a brand-new type of ministry in the PCC, as General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod, was a ground-breaking and creative step. It was from that position that he came to Varsity Acres PC in the summer of 2017, for congregational ministry once more.

This leads to the “how to” part of the question. One thing we have all learned this past year is how God richly blesses us with creativity when we put our collective minds to it. Peter's 10-month example of pivoting quickly and creatively to online worship, meetings and studies helped us realize and believe that we could do it, too. Having had plenty of practice, our community went online to plan, prepare and celebrate Peter's retirement. A live-streamed program, blended with pre-recorded elements, came together as many VAPC folk shared talents and gifts. With an actual audience limited to Peter, Sheri and minimal in-person contributors, it was enjoyed by many in Calgary and even across Canada, on Peter's last Sunday at VAPC on Jan. 10, 2021.

The program began by sharing some of Peter's ministry path through a photo slideshow set to Lenny Gallant's song “Peter's Dream,” sung by the Lost Pilgrims. The Lost Pilgrims has a number of Presbyterian ministerial connections, including one of Peter's former classmates, the Rev. Stephen Kendall. Peter received many tributes in both video and written formats, from former and current colleagues, Sessions and congregants, and representatives of the

broader church, including Knox College and Canadian Ministries. Only a selection of them could be shared in the program due to time constraints, but all were given to Peter for later reflection. These tributes spanned the length of Peter's life and ministry.

Our Faith Formation and Youth groups put together several special videos, acknowledging Peter's unique ministry to them. In addition, a number of choir members created, recorded and sang a rendition of “Be Thou My Vision,” especially for Peter.

One gift presentation came as a result of numerous observations that his current home office chair was very squeaky—it was as clearly present at online meetings as Peter was! After the program, Peter and Sheri were treated to lunch followed by an enthusiastic farewell car parade. Topping it all off was the car sporting the nautical “Blue Peter” flag, a nod to Peter's navy years. The Blue Peter stands for the letter P, and when seen atop a ship at port, it indicates an intention to leave soon, and that the crew should get on board. A fitting flag to prepare for retirement!

Fare ye well, Peter. Thank you for creatively guiding VAPC to God's next destination for us. May God continue to guide and bless you and Sheri richly!



Safely planning and preparing for the big event.

RECOGNITION

The Remarkable Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson

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

For the past 14 years, the congregation of Nine Mile Creek Presbyterian Church in P.E.I. has been blessed by the presence of the Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson as their interim moderator and full-time pulpit supply. On Sunday, Dec. 27, Gordon officially retired from his position and presented a heartfelt final sermon to a Covid-capacity congregation.

Having retired two decades ear-

lier, following an outstanding 23 years at Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown, the Presbytery of P.E.I. appointed Gordon as interim moderator in 2006. At the time, it appeared that this small congregation was on the brink of closure and that Gordon would be best suited to deal with their situation. Since that time, the church has actually built an extension to their facility, rejuvenated a children's ministry and shared their good fortune by tithing their revenue towards mission initiatives. As Gordon himself men-



(Left to right) Watson MacDonald, representative elder to presbytery; Tom Savage, worship leader; the Rev. Douglas Rollwage, Zion Presbyterian Church; the Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson.

tioned during his final sermon, "I'm not really in the business of closing churches."

In his typical modest and Bible-based approach to worship, the Rev. Dr. Matheson presented a three-part sermon interspersed with readings and special music. He focused on the Greatest Gift (Christ's birth),

the Greatest Spiritual Gift (prayer) and ended with the Greatest Promise (the wonder of glorification). As was noted in the church bulletin that Sunday: "When Rev. Matheson steps to the pulpit you know the Lord is working through him, whether that be in a powerful message or an interesting fact or anecdote."

There were several members from Zion Presbyterian Church in attendance to show their support and respect for an entire life committed to God's work. Among the visitors was Zion's lead minister, the Rev. Douglas Rollwage, who spoke of Gordon's continuing role as Minister Emeritus at Zion and the mentorship he has received from Gordon's frequent visits and discussions.

While certainly well-known and respected across our entire denomination, Gordon's wisdom and counsel to his colleagues within the Atlantic synod has been a blessed gift. From the accolades of his fellow presbyters to the words of the Nine Mile Creek congregation, "To have lived a life that has touched so many is an amazing accomplishment."

Presbyterians across the country wish Gordon and Azalia continued strength and happiness in the new year and a time of rest for an outstanding and remarkable career.



Jan Sheridan marked 50 years of service as a ruling elder at Parkwood Presbyterian Church in Ottawa.

By Dennis Featherstone, Clerk of Session, Parkwood Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont.

On Nov. 29, 2020, Parkwood Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., celebrated (virtually) the 50th anniversary of Jan Sheridan's continuous service as a ruling elder. Our minister, the Rev. James Hurd, read a note of appreciation. There was also a clip of appreciation from the moderator of the PCC, a note from the Rev. Susan Mattinson who created a gift of a miniature tapestry, and a display of the tapestry.

Jan Sheridan accepted the call from God and from Christ's church to serve as elder, and on Nov. 29, 1970, she was the first woman ordained as an elder for Parkwood Presbyterian Church. She has served faithfully through all of the ensuing 50 years.

Jan was a teacher in the Sunday School. She also volunteered to be the Sunday School superintendent for several years and served on various church committees. In the latter

years of her service as elder, she devoted many hours to the visitation and assistance of those in her elder's district.

She has been an integral part of the Coffee Klatch, which began as an initiative for young mothers to meet for Bible study, and has continued through the years, now as a Bible study for seniors, meeting in the past year in a retirement residence to accommodate travel limitations.

Jan has taken a great interest in the work of CanHave, supporting orphans in Uganda who have lost their parents to AIDS. She visited Uganda as a part of the delegation under the leadership of Floyd McPhee and took the initiative to reproduce note cards designed by one of the student artists. She has tirelessly supported the ministry of CanHave through the sale of cards and dolls.

At a season in life when many would retire, Jan took on a ministry of outreach to young students who gathered in Parkwood Church for tutoring in the Kumon after-school math and language study program, offering hospitality to their parents and siblings and providing a snack and craft for students with their lesson. This ministry of outreach prompted some families to enquire and learn about Christian faith.

Jan has consistently taken a personal interest in children and youth among the congregation. She has supported those with special needs, offered encouragement to young adults, and followed up with calls

and visits to provide prayer and practical support for individuals and families within her elder's district and in the wider congregation and community.

Jan also supported the English as a Second Language (ESL) outreach initiative, which provided newcomers to Canada and the Parkwood Hills community with opportunities

to practice English conversation and gain skills to navigate life in a new country. For several years, Jan opened her home in December to host a pre-Christmas celebration for newcomers.

Jan has served for many years as coordinator for the Session's benevolent fund and, beyond carrying out administrative and financial duties,

has personally provided help to those in need through the delivery of food and vouchers and the provision of transportation to and from worship, meetings at the church and medical appointments.

On Nov. 30, the Clerk of Session delivered to Jan copies of the notes of appreciation and the miniature tapestry.

50 Years of Eldership in Ottawa

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EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



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 congregation at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hillsburgh, Ont., like many other churches, reverted to online gatherings over Christmas. In order to reach children and their families missing out on traditional Christmas activities because of the lack of Sunday School, craft and activity packages were created and delivered to their doorsteps. Photos of congregation members dressed as characters from the Nativity were collected and collated into a virtual Christmas pageant. Both the activity packs and the pageant were very successful.



Mathias Fehr is a member of Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie, Alta. Every Sunday morning, he arrives wearing his hat, suit and tie, ready to ring the church bell and announce to the community that the church service is about to begin. He brings a gift of candy canes with attached Christmas wishes for the congregation to share at Christmas. Thank you to Mathias, for his special dedication in ringing the church bell!

Since moving worship online, the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., has held three online Communion services. Led by the Rev. Dr. Karen Dimock, members participated in the Lord's Supper from the safety of their homes and connected to one another through the body, blood and Word of the Lord.

Though we are missing our church, we are still a wonderfully loving, kind and engaged community—apart but together. The Lord will be with you, with all of us, wherever we are, from wherever we worship.



Each year, Tweedsmuir Memorial Presbyterian Church in Orangeville, Ont., participates in "Christmas in the Park." Due to COVID-19, this event could not take place, so the display was put up in front of the church instead. The congregation wishes everyone God's great blessings in 2021!

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



Where there's a will, there's a way. On Dec. 19, 2020, the Inbetweeners group, along with friends of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont., prepared a Christmas dinner for 380 hungry people. COVID-19 meant that the congregation had to adapt their traditional sit-down meal, and they did! A free take-out-style turkey dinner was offered for pickup or delivery. The small group who prepared this meal had their hearts filled with smiles and kind words from those picking up their dinners. The need was greater than ever during the pandemic. We all needed something to look forward to and for many this would be their Christmas dinner.



The congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Picton, Ont., is looking toward a more sustainable future for their church by transforming the sanctuary to accommodate a wider range of community activities and faith practices. To help in this work, the congregation invited Doreen Balabanoff, an artist and professor at Ontario College of Art & Design University, to help them re-vision their future and their building. Balabanoff assessed the sanctuary with the congregation's Celtic roots, Indigenous friends and love of the planet in mind, and provided recommendations for creating a very different, yet more open space. Pictured to the bottom right is the original sanctuary, with models of the new sanctuary pictured above. PHOTO CREDIT: DOREEN BALABANOFF



This past Christmas, Knox Presbyterian Church in Vernon, B.C., challenged its members to support the Okanagan Learning Foundation's "Food for Thought" program—an initiative that supplies weekend food backpacks for teenagers at local high schools. Twenty-four empty bags were placed under the tree, representing the 24 days of Advent. Church members filled the bags with either teen-friendly food or a monetary donation. By the time schools closed prior to Christmas, the food and an additional \$1,700 were handed over to the Learning Foundation for distribution.



EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



At Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie, Alta., the ladies have a bazaar, bake sale and tea every year in November to raise funds to donate to the community. This year that was not possible, so a new project was planned: Tea to Go! The ladies baked cookies and put together colourful bags containing Christmas mugs complete with tea bags, cookies, treats, candy and a Christmas message. In total, 120 bags were sold, and very generous donations were also received. The congregation was very supportive and appreciated having ready-made gifts for friends and family. They are thankful they can continue to help others with their donations again this year!



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Picton, Ont., added a fire pit, straw bales and spectacular lighting to its property around the labyrinth so that they could share coffee hour after worship inside, as well as gather around the fire after community hikes and labyrinth walks. Although these were "pandemic initiatives," congregants will continue to take up sacred practice and community togetherness outside.



Middle River (Rocklin) Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew's (Gairloch) Presbyterian Church in Westville, N.S., participated in a Reverse Advent Calendar for the month of November. Each day, one item was set aside for the local food bank. All donations were boxed up and weighed before being loaded into cars. An amazing 602 pounds of food was donated! What a terrific act of kindness from these churches.



Cornerstone, a mission of Knox Presbyterian Church in Dunnville, Ont., held a Christmas celebration at the farm of its founder, the Rev. Nicole Reid. Everyone enjoyed hot chocolate, cookies, puzzles, carolling and setting off fireworks in the bonfire.



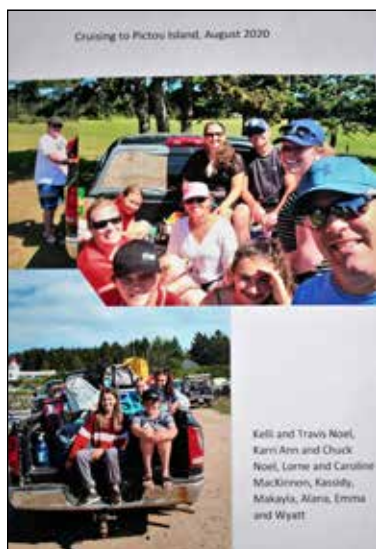
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Nanaimo, B.C., told the Nativity story in a fresh and physically distanced way. Congregants created scenes, and then, by following maps provided by the church, drove from house to house. At each stop, they read their portion of the story, waved to friends and celebrated Christmas together.



EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



Sweet Heart Surprise is a Valentine's Day fundraiser organized by Iona Presbyterian Church in Dartmouth, N.S., that has been running for 26 years. The treat included a dozen homemade cookies and a flower (a wooden rose), plus a tag that said who it is from and who it is going to, with a short, personalized message. This year, 74 trays were hand-delivered.



Last spring, Marjorie Johnson Fraser of St. David's Presbyterian Church in Toney River, N.S., had the idea to compile an album that represented the life of St. David's in 2020. Members were asked to share stories and photos about how they have spent their time during the COVID-19 lockdowns. An enthusiastic group of over 65 children and adults contributed. All of the submissions were put into an album entitled "Till the Storm Passes By"—46 back-to-back pages showing how the congregation has been making the most of this isolated time "till the storm passes by."



First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont., was glad to be part of the grant presentation to the Refugees for Brockville organization from the Emergency Community Support Program, which supports refugees and refugee sponsorship in the Brockville community. The Rev. Marianne Emig Carr participated in the presentation with local MP Michael Barrett, the United Way of Leeds & Grenville, the Brockville Employment and Education Centre and the Brockville and Area Community Foundation.



This past Christmas, many hands contributed to the success of the Christmas Food Hamper outreach at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont. Thanks to the congregation's generosity, 60 food hampers were completed and delivered to recipients who were overwhelmed with gratitude to receive them.



During the pandemic, the West River Pastoral Charge in Pictou County, N.S., has held in-person worship services nearly every Sunday since Sept. 20, 2020, in Salt Springs, Greenhill and Durham. Gifts for families, for the Star Wish Program, and food bank donations were all received on the first Sunday of December. Elder Lorraine Tobin stands near a sorted portion of the faith communities' generosity. *This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24).*



The congregation of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont., maintains the sign in front of their church to remind members and the community that, while the church building may be closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, the work of God continues.

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EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



Women from Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., attended an online women's retreat where they crafted a new COVID-19 pulpit fall, which was then assembled by Sandy Green. Even though COVID-19 keeps us physically apart, we are spiritually stitched together.



Rob Robertson, from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., accepted the Kerry Kaiser Award on behalf of the St. Andrew's "All Saints." The award was presented to the All Saints by Ottawa's Centretown Churches chair, Kristine Burr, for engaging the most donors and raising the most money in the annual walk to support the Centretown Emergency Food Centre. Kerry Kaiser, who was the long-serving director of the Centre, passed away in December.



Gail and Bob Bowes of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., delivered the frozen berries they grow and sell to support the congregation's refugee sponsorship fund.



The Living Christmas Tree Committee of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lindsay, Ont., prepared a virtual presentation of their annual Living Christmas Tree service for Christmas 2020. The presentation, entitled "Christmas Hope," went online Dec. 6, 2020, and has garnered over 1,000 views.



A fall recital was held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Victoria, B.C., on Nov. 18, 2020. The audience sat back, relaxed, listened and were taken away with the beautiful music performed by the talented Jorge Eduardo Flores Carrizales and Rio Kadama. It was the first recital since COVID-19, and it was such a joy to attend; for 45 minutes, listeners forgot about the pandemic. The congregation looks forward to continuing these recitals once provincial health mandates allow it. PHOTO CREDIT: JEAN MARCELLUS



St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont., presented a virtual modern-day Christmas Pageant, "Do Not Be Afraid." The video footage was filmed over the course of four hours on a Saturday and was expertly edited into an entertaining pageant for the Sunday following Christmas.



EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Oshawa, Ont., was unable to host its usual yard sale and bazaar fundraiser for local charities because of the pandemic. So the music director, Amanda de Boer, and her husband, Steven Ladwig, decided to host a physically distanced driveway concert on Sept. 27, 2020, on behalf of St. Paul's, to raise funds for some of the charities normally supported by the church. They performed a variety of songs (classic rock and oldies) for an hour and raised \$320 to be split between Gate 3:16 and Denise House. As well, several bags of canned and dry goods were collected for Settlement House Food Bank.



Due to the pandemic, the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church in Dunnville, Ont., was missing its tradition of serving several congregational dinners every year. So, through Session, members were offered a lasagna dinner delivered to them or for pickup on Dec. 8. Congregation numbers are down but the number of requests was a surprise—105 orders came in! The day before pickup, committee members made 20 fruit pies. On the actual day, members met early (masked, of course) to produce 12 large casseroles of lasagna. Each package also included coleslaw and garlic bread. At 4:00 p.m., pickup began and delivery was carried out by other team members. There was no charge but people could make a contribution: \$740 was collected. We all felt cheered and a little more united! A special thank you to our chief cook, Pat Battle, and our cheerleader minister, the Rev. Dave Whitecross.



Nine churches in Bradford West Gwillimbury, Ont., participated in a drive-by Nativity Tour. Each church depicted a scene in the Christmas Story. St. John's Presbyterian Church depicted the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary. The Nativity Tour exceeded expectations and was a huge success, with some estimating that 450 cars passed by the churches in the community. It has been quite some time since cars lined up to get into the church parking lot. The team pictured from left to right includes Ron Glendenning, Amanda Farrish, Jeff Tranton, Scott Hearn (Gabriel), Kayla Tranton (Mary), Bibi Ganesh and the Rev. Dr. Daniel Scott.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



Amanda de Boer, music director at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Oshawa, Ont., started a charity fundraising drive for feminine hygiene products. This year, to keep everyone safe, she planned a "Drive Thru Event," which was held Sunday Nov. 22, during one of the worst snowstorms of 2020! Thanks to a gracious offer from St. Luke's Presbyterian Church in Oshawa, the event was held in the church's large and conveniently located parking lot. St. Paul's congregation helped advertise the event, and many from the congregation came to donate both money and products—and have a physically distanced picture taken with Santa! This was a very successful event with \$1,750 in cash donations and over 11,500 individually wrapped hygiene products donated to several local Oshawa charities.



On Sunday, Nov. 1, members of First Presbyterian Church in Portage la Prairie, Man., prepared a take-out version of the church's annual Turkey Fall Supper. They were very surprised and pleased by the overwhelming success of pre-selling the meals, with a total of 257 orders received. Donations of supplies for the supper came from the congregation as well as from three local farms. People were thankful for such an excellent meal and for the church taking on such an endeavour in these hectic times. Adapting the supper into a take-out service was a big undertaking and learning curve for the congregation, but they are grateful for what they have learned and hope to be able to provide a take-out meal again in place of their annual Spring Dinner.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



The Mission Team of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ancaster, Ont., conducted a community Textile Recycling Drive on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020. Pictured right are (front row, left to right): Jenn Pooni, Anne Yee-Hibbs, Steve Potter, and (back row) Pat Foley, John Hibbs, Linda Bleue. This initiative prevented 2,000 pounds of textiles from going into a landfill site.



The Rev. Mary Campbell of Claude Presbyterian Church in Caledon, Ont., put her crafting skills to good use during the pandemic, building a new Nativity scene for the church. It was a lot of hard work but she created a marvellous display. While it was disappointing that the church was unable to open over Advent and Christmas in 2020, the congregation is grateful for Mary's artistic accomplishment, and looks forward to setting up the scene this year.



Even though the congregation at Claude Presbyterian Church in Caledon, Ont., was prevented from gathering in person for Christmas Eve worship, they still managed to display the spirit of Christmas to those passing by on Highway 10 in the Caledon area.



Members of the First Presbyterian Church Brockville Chancel Choir in Brockville, Ont., gathered in December at the Royal Brock Retirement Living residence to serenade long-time singer Max Farrelly on his 90th birthday. In true 2020 pandemic style, the choir stood outside the Royal Brock's main entrance (physically distanced and wearing masks) and sang Christmas carols for Max, members of his family, and approximately 25 other residents, concluding with a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday." Congratulations and best wishes, Max!



INTERNATIONAL

COVID-19 and International Ministries



By Vivian Bertrand, former PCC mission staff in Blantyre, Malawi (2017–2020)

In 2020, about 1.8 million people died from COVID-19 worldwide. Over seven million people died from hunger.¹ The pandemic will end, but we don't know if hunger will. Why have people all over the world drastically changed their daily lives to prevent COVID-19 deaths, while people are dying from hunger at a faster rate—and have been for decades?

We react to what impacts us and what we can see. It is difficult to remember those struggling in other parts of the world unless we know them personally. Recently, during an online meeting of the PCC's International Ministries' (IM) Advisory Committee, I was asked how I thought COVID-19 will impact IM's work. My answer may have startled some committee members. Perhaps I think differently than many Canadians because I was living in Malawi when the pandemic began. My experience in Malawi is why I think our response to COVID-19 proves that the PCC needs more from IM, not less.

In 2017, IM sent my husband,

our three children and me to Malawi, where we made friendships and lived and served alongside our Presbyterian sisters and brothers. It was a unique opportunity and one I would highly recommend. Living in Malawi, where people are extremely warm and community-oriented, has impacted how I view our response to COVID-19 and the future ministry of IM. Many people in Malawi face death or hunger every day, and life expectancy is nearly 20 years younger than in Canada.²

IM is a unique ministry of the PCC. Until COVID-19 hit, through IM, the PCC sent staff to live and serve with our church partners around the world. While Presbyterian World Service & Development does extremely important work as well, it does not send staff to live overseas and serve locally as members of the global community of Presbyterians. In Malawi, I worked for a relief and development organization called Churches Action in Relief and Development. I was the only non-Malawian in the office. Some of my work involved helping Malawians recover after they lost their crops and homes to Cyclone Idai. I visited villages after

the cyclone and met people who had lost everything. Living and working in someone else's country is a powerful way to show that they are important to us. It shows that we haven't forgotten that they are our siblings in Christ. It also teaches us much about our faith, culture, world view and priorities.

After living in the "Warm Heart of Africa," as Malawi is so accurately known, one of my greatest fears is that Canadians will be afraid to live courageously and warmly when this is over. Will we be afraid to hug each other? Will some children be too afraid to go to school? Will we be so used to being locked up at home that we will continue to live isolated lives? As a nation, we have reacted in fear.

Canadians have hoarded not only toilet paper but vaccines as well. Canada tops the chart of global vaccine hoarders with enough to vaccinate each Canadian five times.³ COVAX was set up to ensure fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.⁴ Canada signed on to COVAX, and I am proud to say we are the third largest donors in the world after the European Commission and the United Kingdom.⁵ However, we have undermined the efficacy of COVAX by signing purchasing agreements for more vaccines per capita than any other country in the world.⁶ We did this to ensure that we could have access to whichever vaccines were ready first. I understand the logic, and I know that I will benefit from this hoarding. It doesn't mean I agree with it. As of December 2020, wealthy nations representing only 14% of the world's population had bought up 53% of the most promising vaccines.⁷ Meanwhile, the poorest nations may have a long wait for vaccines to reach them.⁸

Our response to COVID-19 highlights the importance of IM's work. We recognize how easily we focus only on our country or our fears when we are faced with trials, and how easy it is to hoard resources and protect our families while forgetting the struggles of those living in other parts of the world. I hope that COVID-19 will change us for the better—individually and as the church.

Most of all, I hope that when restrictions are lifted we will be less fearful. I hope that I will hug my neighbours and friends and family more often. I hope that I will be more grateful for what I have, fear economic instability less and therefore tithe more intentionally. As a church, I hope we do not stop the work of IM because of fear. Once vaccines are available to IM staff, I think we should continue



to send them to live and serve alongside our sisters and brothers around the world. The relationships we form will help us as the church and as individuals to be more compassionate and responsive to those who face death or hunger every day.

FOOTNOTES

Full sources for all footnotes are available

- 1 Maytaal Angel, "World Food Programme says needs \$6.8 billion over next 6 months to avert famine." Reuters. October 13, 2020.
- 2 In Canada, 93% of persons who have died from COVID-19 have been past the life expectancy of someone born in Malawi (64 years of age). (For statistics on COVID-19 deaths in Canada, see Health Canada, Figure 5 and choose deceased.)
- 3 Bill Curry, "Canada and Other Wealthier Countries Undermining Efforts to Ensure Equitable Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine, Report Warns." *Globe and Mail*, November 1, 2020.
- 4 COVAX is a global alliance working to ensure fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for people in all countries of the world, regardless of

their wealth.

- 5 Bill Curry, *Globe and Mail*, November 1, 2020; Gavi. The Vaccine Alliance, "Donor Profiles: Canada."
- 6 Bill Curry, *Globe and Mail*, November 1, 2020.
- 7 Samira Sawlani, "When will COVID-19 Vaccinations start in African Countries?" Al Jazeera. December 11, 2020.
- 8 Maria Cheng and Aniruddha Ghosal, "Poor Countries Face Long Wait for Vaccines Despite Promises." AP News. December 15, 2020.



Through grants and mission staff, Presbyterians Sharing supports 53 mission partners working in 25 countries.

INTERNATIONAL

Christmas in Bethlehem



Palestinian children re-enact Christ's birth.

By Shaun MacDonald, former Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine-Israel

As part of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) mission in Palestine, my colleagues and I were given the privilege of three days off over Christmas to spend in Bethlehem, with accommodations and meals provided. We were all excited to get a reprieve from our work and to get the chance to spend time with the entire group again (there were 21 of us in all). We were from nine different countries around the world and had formed strong bonds of friendship in our two and a half months in Palestine and Israel up to that point.

My friend Billy from Ireland and I had hit it off particularly well. Besides sharing a sense of humour and love for the work we were doing, we had even studied the same subjects in university. Billy was based in the north of Palestine near Nablus while I was in the southern city of Hebron. We met in Jerusalem on December 23, staying in a hostel attached to the Syriac Catholic Church just outside of Damascus Gate, the entrance to the old city of Jerusalem. We spent the day exploring the Garden of the Tomb, a small grove just outside the walls of the old city that competes with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the location of Jesus's crucifixion. What is interesting about this

place is that the hill it is located on has always been traditionally referred to as the "Hill of Skulls," which is what Golgotha translates to in English. There is also an actual rock-cut tomb on the premises, with crosses carved into the walls by crusaders nearly 1,000 years before.

Next morning, we packed our bags and jumped on an early bus to head to the checkpoint that gives access to Bethlehem and the West Bank. After crossing the checkpoint (with far greater ease than our Palestinian counterparts), we were greeted with the ubiquitous Israeli military presence before making our way to our lodgings to drop off our luggage—the aptly titled Bethlehem Inn. Most of our colleagues had not yet arrived so we decided to explore the city and try to find our way down to Manger Square, where the main festivities would occur. In the end this was not a difficult task. Bethlehem is a tourist town due to its significance to Christians, with gift shops on every corner selling every sort of Christmas trinket you can imagine. But this was unprecedented: throngs of people walking as streets were closed off to traffic, all going in the same direction. We decided to follow the crowd. Along the way, every couple of hundred meters, we met up with groups of armed men in uniform; but this was not the Israel Defense Forces, this was the Palestinian Authority security service. They were open and

gregarious, offering to take photos with us and wishing us a "Happy Christmas." Soon we heard cheering as a parade approached from behind us: this was the motorcade carrying the patriarchs and archbishops of the churches of Jerusalem. We stopped to watch the parade and waved to the officials as they went by, then quickly hurried up to Manger Square to secure a place from which we could observe the ceremonies.

Upon reaching the Square I was enthralled. Thousands of worshippers gathered around; a smorgasbord of languages from all over the world could be heard among them. At one end of the Square stands the minaret of a Mosque, at the other the Church of the Nativity. And all around, both Christians and Muslims celebrating (as Christ is a most revered prophet in Islam as well). We stood near the entrance to the church and took in the festivities, which included speeches and, of course, music—including a Palestinian bagpiping band playing traditional Celtic music, much to the delight of my Irish friend and me. After this portion, the Holy Fathers proceeded into the church for a Latin service, which we attended for a short period, but it was difficult to take in with the crowds of worshippers streaming into the building.

We made our way back to the Inn and met up with our teammates. We had dinner reservations at a local restaurant, and what a feast it was! The waiters kept coming out with

plate after plate of traditional Palestinian dishes. The whole group ate until we had to practically roll away from the tables. Satisfied, we retired to the Inn where the staff had set up a hospitality room for us. The Jericho team (three young women from Sweden, Switzerland and Germany) had planned an evening of Christmas fun. We played games, took turns telling traditional Christmas stories, read poems and of course sang some songs. A particularly poignant moment was when our Swiss and German colleagues sang an acapella version of "Silent Night" in German, the original language in which it was written. Finishing off the evening with gift giving, (we had drawn names for a "Secret Santa"), we exchanged small gifts, mostly traditional, handmade works from each of the Palestinian towns where we were stationed: Nabulsi soap, therapeutic Dead Sea mud, Phoenician glass from Hebron.

In the morning, several of us attended another local church for the Christmas Day service. It was amazing for me to watch young Palestinian children re-enacting the Christmas story in front of the congregation, just as I had done many times as a young boy growing up in Knox Presbyterian Church in Baddeck, N.S. The service was of course in Arabic, but I felt like I understood every word of it.

Unfortunately, it was soon time to go. We had to start making our way back to our placements. Billy and I



Escorting Palestinian children to school in Bethlehem past armed soldiers.

went back to our hotel room to pack our things, and before we left we took a final look out over Bethlehem through our large picture window, and were hit with a stark reminder: just below us was a section of the Great Barrier Wall, a planned 740 km barricade cutting off Israel from Palestine. In Bethlehem most of the work is completed, so we were looking at a 30-foot-high concrete enclosure, reinforced with military guard towers, that cut right through the city, separating Palestinian Bethlehem from the illegal Israeli settlements surrounding it. With resolute hearts, we knew we had work to get back to.

To be an Ecumenical Accompanier means walking alongside those who are suffering, and boldly telling their stories to the world. Some of our greatest challenges would lie ahead.



Artwork by Palestinian children.

INTERNATIONAL

A New Moderator in East Africa

By International Ministries

The Rev. Patrick Thegu Mutahi will be the new Moderator of the 23rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). He will be installed in April 2021 for a three-year term, with a possible second term. When expressing our best wishes for his election to this new position, he replied that, "It is a great honour and privilege from God." The PCEA is a growing church with 54 presbyteries and over 3,200

congregations in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been a partner since 1983, when the first mission volunteer served.

The Rev. Mutahi has a 20-year connection with the PCC. He was selected to be in the first HIV and AIDS training program for pastors, because of his progressive views. Dr. Richard Allen, PCC mission staff who served in Kenya from 1994 to 2015, played a major role in conceiving and teaching the program. The Rev. Mutahi



The Rev. Patrick Thegu Mutahi and former international mission staff Dr. Rick Allen in 2015.

explained that in 2000, when the program began, 600 people were dying daily from the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The training program demystified the causes of the epidemic, as most peo-

ple blamed the illness on sin or witchcraft. Years later, the Rev. Mutahi was invited to Canada as an international partner guest to attend the PCC 2015 General Assembly, held in Vancouver, B.C. Expressing the importance of our mutual partnership, he paid tribute to Dr. Allen for his training activities and for the development of a groundbreaking HIV and AIDS policy, which is still considered by many as the most progressive HIV and AIDS policy of any church in Africa.

In 2016, The Presbyterian Church in Canada received a request from the moderator of the PCEA, asking for scholarship support for the Rev. Mutahi, who was pursuing a Ph.D. in Religious Studies at the Catholic University of East Africa. The Rev. Mutahi had been teaching at the Presby-

terian University of East Africa, which serves as seminary training for ministers and he was also a chaplain. We were pleased to support his studies. The Rev. Mutahi's thesis title is: "The Perspectives of Muslim Leaders in the Nairobi Presbyterian Metropolis Towards Faithful Interreligious Dialogue with Christians." Insecurity in Kenya has been a concern for decades and the Rev. Mutahi's commitment to engagement in religious dialogue is a sign of hope.

In a recent email, the Rev. Mutahi wrote: "My hope is that our partnership with the PCC will be strengthened now that I have connections with you." To this, we say, Amen.

The Rev. Mutahi is married to Wanjiru and together they have two sons, Mutahi and Kamau.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

A Changing Sense of Partnership



Through partnership with Canadian Foodgrains Bank, PWS&D accesses government funding to maximize the impact of food security and emergency food projects, like this one in South Sudan. PHOTO CREDIT: CFGB/ADRA

By Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Director

Since 1982, PWS&D has been working in partnership with the Canadian government to achieve mutually agreed upon development goals. Our programs have evolved—from the initial grants in the early years that had few strings attached until now when the government's requirements for reporting and accountability have risen exponentially. For a long time, PWS&D could expect to receive government funding at a predictable level, around \$400,000 per year, in a 3:1 matching formula. This arrangement allowed for predictability in the length of agreements and new proposals could be developed to ensure continuity.

As government priorities shifted over time, our program proposals also shifted to ensure that priorities were aligned. As civil society organizations, PWS&D's partners were able to fill gaps where local governments were lacking—making it possible to reach out to populations that might otherwise be left behind.

Over the years, PWS&D, with funding from the Government of Canada, supported partners in Malawi, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. We helped improve peoples' livelihoods, health and food security. We also supported women's rights movements through active empowerment at the grass-

roots level.

In recent years though, the government's partnership model has changed. Through a call for proposals model, the government adopted a competitive process for access to funds. This system often includes a particular development sector focus and projects are selected based on scale and alignment with geographic and thematic priorities.

PWS&D was initially quite successful within this new model. A three-year proposal to support maternal, newborn and child health in Malawi and Afghanistan from 2011 to 2014 was approved. Building on the positive outcome of this project, we successfully submitted a proposal for the next period, which was double the size.

At the peak, we were programming \$2 million per year in Malawi and Afghanistan and making a significant difference in the lives of thousands of women and children in places where access to health services was previously non-existent or severely restricted. Field visits by our Canadian government program officers affirmed the necessity of our initiative and the added value that we were bringing to the table.

In 2020, we concluded the second phase of our maternal, newborn and child health project with the Government of Canada. In response to the government's call for proposals, PWS&D submitted a five-year proposal which would have built on the results of the last seven years. The government received three times the number of proposals than could be supported by the funds allocated to

this initiative. Unfortunately, this proposal was not approved by the government.

In this new context, organizations—like PWS&D and our partners overseas—spend a substantial amount of time, energy and money to develop proposals with little guarantee of funding. Many get turned down simply because there are not enough resources available to support all the proposals, regardless of past success or the quality of the project.

Now, for the first time in nearly 40 years of partnership, PWS&D faces a period with no direct funding from the Canadian government.

In some cases, sustainability was achieved—in Afghanistan, for example, the Afghan government has taken over responsibility for the clinics that were established by our partner with PWS&D funding. In other cases, it will be difficult for remote hospital outreach programs to continue without our support, such as the Embangweni Mission Hospital in Malawi. Within this new reality we are working with our partners to ensure the progress made over the past number of years is not lost.

Fortunately, PWS&D is still able to access government matching funds, up to 4:1, through its membership in Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We are currently leveraging this opportunity by leading a food assistance project in Afghanistan and contributing to support people affected by the Syria crisis, droughts in South Sudan, hunger in Yemen, as well as supporting conservation agriculture efforts in Malawi.

Additionally, funds contributed by



Between 2011 and 2020, PWS&D, with support from the Canadian government, worked to improve maternal and child health in Afghanistan and Malawi. PHOTO CREDIT: CWSA

PWS&D to KAIROS' Women, Peace and Security program are matched 3:1. Through this project, women's groups in Colombia, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Palestine and Israel are supported in their efforts to eradicate gender-based violence.

In response to these changing circumstances, PWS&D advocates with other Canadian development agencies to engage the Canadian government's attention on issues related both to the amount of funding available for overseas development assistance, but also the mechanisms by which they are distributed.

As we look forward, we are rethinking our strategies to access government funding. We may need to form stronger alliances to increase our scale and our capacity to make a difference. We may need to think outside the box to build a renewed vision of what's possible in changing times.

Thank you for continuing to support the ministry of PWS&D in these turbulent times, when reaching out to the world is more important than ever.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Lebanon Crisis: Six Months Later



Hagop and his sister, Anaheed, stand on their balcony overlooking the damaged port in Beirut. PHOTO CREDIT: MERATH-LEBANON

By *Stephanie Chunoo,*
PWS&D Communications

In early August 2020, multiple explosions rocked Beirut's port, causing substantial damage to homes and health care facilities. It is estimated that the blast left 300,000 people homeless, including 80,000 children.

Ninety-year-old Hagop and his 80-year-old sister, Anaheed, still

clearly recall the moment the explosions occurred. The blast shook their entire apartment and threw Anaheed in the air, injuring her back, legs and head.

When the explosions hit, they ravaged Hagop and Anaheed's home, destroying their windows, doors, furniture and compromised the structure. Fearing that their apartment might get robbed, the duo slept on

the floor in the debris for three days.

Before the devastating explosions, Lebanon was already facing an economic crisis. COVID-19 only made the situation worse—many lost their jobs, making it difficult to access food and health care.

In response, PWS&D, with partners at Canadian Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance, provided vital food and other essential aid, including help with the clean-up efforts. Assistance will continue for months as people get their lives back together.

Hagop and his sister were able to get the windows and doors of their apartment fixed. Their apartment building is being repaired. "The church has given us vouchers, which we used to buy food from the supermarket. They were also so kind as to give us a new refrigerator and a new oven, since ours were not working anymore since the explosions. Some people from the church are also cooking for us every day and bringing us hot meals to eat."

While there is more work to be done as the pair continue to rebuild their lives, Hagop reflects, "Still, we are thankful, because God protected us! Our faith is helping us a lot in this difficult time... When I struggle walking, I pray for God to carry me



Volunteers get ready to deliver hot meals to those affected by the blasts. PHOTO CREDIT: NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID/HÅVARD BJELLAND

through some more steps. We pray we can walk normally again soon and not need assistance anymore."

Thank You...

Thanks to the generosity of Presbyterians across Canada, \$164,132 was raised to aid in the Lebanon relief efforts. These funds allowed PWS&D to provide vouchers for families to purchase the food they need and vouchers for small businesses to buy materials to start

rebuilding. Additionally, funds have assisted in the restoration of damaged homes and schools, and provided water and sanitation kits for households, and supplied emergency school kits for students upon their return to school.

Your continuous support is helping many vulnerable families through an incredibly challenging time.

To learn more about PWS&D's Lebanon response, visit WeRespond.ca/Beirut.

Climate Change and Food Security

By *Karen Bokma,*
PWS&D Communications

Our ability to feed ourselves depends on the natural environment. Farmers the world over rely on sufficient water, healthy soil, biodiversity and positive climatic conditions for their livelihoods.

But the global environment is increasingly under stress, which negatively impacts agricultural productivity and food security. Sustainable agriculture practices, which can improve food production and farmer livelihoods, are needed to help farmers address the environmental challenges they face.

Sustainable agriculture is especially important for smallholder farmers—the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN estimates that 90 percent of the world's 570 million farms are small, often no more than two hectares of land. These farmers, with their mostly manual labour, play an essential role in feeding the world.

Andrew Mzimbe and Flora Botha are two such farmers. The married couple farm about two acres of land in northern Malawi. In recent years

they have experienced increasingly difficult weather events—unpredictable rain resulting in both drought and floods—and watched the quality of their soil degrade over time.

In response, Andrew and Flora joined a conservation agriculture project supported by PWS&D's local church partner. Conservation agriculture—a technique to support sustainable farming—enables farmers to reduce vulnerability, adapt to climate change and improve food security.

Through the project, the couple has learned about the three key principles of conservation agriculture: minimal soil disturbance through reduced or no tillage; permanent soil cover, such as mulch; and diversified crop rotation or intercropping.

Conservation agriculture is knowledge intensive and requires extensive learning initially, but when done well, it is a boon to soil productivity, soil health, resource management and greenhouse gas reduction, particularly for smallholder farmers where alternatives are limited, according to the FAO. Some farmers see their production go up manyfold after integrating conservation agriculture



Sustainable agriculture is essential to help address both climate change and food security. PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL JEFFREY

techniques, at low or no cost.

The Synod of Livingstonia Development Department, PWS&D's partner in northern Malawi, provides ongoing training and consultation to the farmers who are part of the project. Flora and Andrew attend regular training, where they learn about organic fertilizers and intercropping.

Since joining the project, the couple has doubled the amount of land they are farming using conservation agriculture because they've seen how successful the results are. Compared to the areas of their conventional farm, they are harvesting much more and have seen notable improvements in their soil quality.

Flora has also been empowered through the gender training that is

part of the project to advocate for her views in how the couple farms. After attending a training, Flora knew that it would be important for the couple to rotate their crops more than they had in the past. After raising her concerns with Andrew and presenting the information from the training, the couple decided to rotate the crops, with successful results.

Sustainable agriculture practices, like conservation agriculture, are especially important for smallholder farmers, who are often the first to experience the negative effects of climate change. Those who experience hunger on a regular basis are most at risk of increased food and nutrition insecurity due to environmental crises. Continued investment in ad-



Andrew Mzimbe and Flora Botha farm their small plot of land using conservation agriculture techniques, which help address some of the effects of climate change.

dressing climate adaption techniques is essential to achieve food security for millions of hungry people around the world.

While the farmers in Flora and Andrew's community continue to face challenges as they strive for food security, the conservation agriculture techniques they have learned are helping them address the real climate concerns they face and grow more food to sustain their families.

To learn more about climate change and what you can do to help address it, check out Allyson Carr's article on the For the Love of Creation faith-based climate initiative on p. 10.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

COVID-19: Responding Faithfully, Globally



Working with local faith communities has allowed PWS&D to respond quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO CREDIT: LWF/ACT ALLIANCE

By Rob Shropshire,
PWS&D Program Coordinator

For over a year, the world has been dealing with COVID-19. Here in Canada, many have been impacted through the loss of loved ones, lost livelihoods and prolonged isolation. It has been nearly impossible to turn on a TV or radio, or open a newspaper or website, without getting news of COVID-19 in Canada or around the world.

In January 2021, the number of documented cases approached 90 million worldwide, with two million deaths. In a December interview with the Canadian Press, Canada's International Development Minister, the Hon. Karina Gould, said, "What we're talking about in international development is a decade of lost gains."

Progress on key development indi-

cators, like the Sustainable Development Goals, has gone backward. The number of people experiencing acute hunger increased, as did the number of people who live in extreme poverty. Working to meet the humanitarian needs of the pandemic and then to help individuals, especially the most vulnerable, build back better is a critically important long-term obligation.

PWS&D has responded to COVID-19 with direct support to long-term partners in many countries where governments simply do not have the means to support their people through this crisis. We have also responded to many other corners of the world through our membership in Canadian Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance.

That faith-based organizations, such as PWS&D, the Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance, play a key role in responding to such crises is receiving increased recognition in Canada and internationally.

As well as responding to major disasters, ACT makes an annual appeal for its Global Rapid Response Fund to provide immediate assistance to smaller-scale emergencies or in the first days of a major disaster, working with local ACT members. In launching the 2020 appeal, ACT noted: "Our national members and local faith communities play (a primary role) in humanitarian response. Dignity, community empowerment and capacity-building are cornerstones of our local and national responses. Our members at the local and national levels are embedded within communities, familiar with the needs of communities and able to respond before any other actor

in times of crisis."

Thus, when ACT organized the ACT Alliance High-Level Dialogue on COVID-19 in December 2020, international attendees included senior staff of UN humanitarian agencies and faith-based relief and development agencies, ministers from different governments and senior officials from churches in many countries.

Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, stated, "Faith-based communities are absolutely essential for the continuity of the family and for the transmission of values of human dignity and human rights, and love for one another, that the United Nations' Charter also espouses. When we think about COVID-19, people of faith, who are always steadfast in defense of anyone in danger of being left behind, are going to be more and more called on."

Mr. Erik Lysén, Director of ACT Church of Sweden, commented that, "The world is predominantly religious. If we want to change behaviour and norms, we need to work with faith leaders and communities. Local communities are always the first responders in humanitarian action or in responding to diseases. In many countries, faith-based organizations are responsible for providing a significant part of health services, especially in underserved and marginalized communities.

"Faith communities and faith-related organizations are also active at the national level with a prophetic voice, in advocacy for inclusive social policies, democratic accountability and human



In Afghanistan, where PWS&D is providing emergency food relief to people affected by COVID-19, working with faith leaders builds trust within local communities.

rights," he continued. "During the COVID-19 pandemic...we have seen many faith actors stepping up, both in terms of services and support."

It is gratifying to see the international community's growing appreciation of the role of faith-based organizations in responding where there is humanitarian need, which is so present during this pandemic. Yet at the High-Level Dialogue, some speakers challenged us all to do more. PWS&D's collaboration with partners and organizations like the Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance allows us to make a difference while living out our values of compassion, justice and partnership, inspired by God's promise of abundant life for all.

Visit [WeRespond.ca/COVID-19](https://www.werespond.ca/COVID-19) to learn more about PWS&D's global response to the coronavirus pandemic.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

In February 2018, the Moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada issued a letter to LGBTQI people and the church repenting of homophobia and hypocrisy. The Life and Mission Agency wants to hear from you. How have you used the Letter of Repentance in your ministry and what actions have you taken towards repentance and reconciliation?

Contact Carragh Erhardt
Program Coordinator
Sexuality and Inclusion
cerhardt@presbyterian.ca

Champions' Corner

By Emma Clarke,
PWS&D Communications

These days, it's rare to see a colourful table laid with goodies for sale to support a PWS&D program. A large group of people walking or biking together for the Ride for Refuge is a distant memory. Yet these used to be important initiatives for PWS&D Champions—volunteers passionate about engaging their congregations to support the work of PWS&D.

Creativity has always been one of the traits that makes a great Champion, and with the COVID-19 pandemic it has become even more important. Committed volunteers across Canada have come up with bright new ideas to keep their communities inspired to help people in need.

A Day in the Life of a Champion

In the past, "Whenever anyone made an Advent donation they were able to put an ornament on the Giving Tree," commented St. Andrew's Champion Barbara Waine. This winter, people driving by St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Nanaimo, were greeted by a brightly coloured tree in the window, lovingly crafted from construction paper. Excited to see the tree become more colourful with each new act of generosity, Barbara strung the ornaments up herself. "We can all make a difference in our world by sharing!"

If you would like to join the community of Champions in support of PWS&D's work, please contact Emma Clarke at eclarke@presbyterian.ca.



The colourful Giving Tree in the window of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Nanaimo, B.C., celebrates the congregation's generosity.

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

An Arrival Against All Odds



A Syrian family sponsored by Beaches Presbyterian Church arrives in Canada in November 2020.

By Klaas Kraay, Beaches Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

from the Congo, Colombia, Iran and Syria.

Since 2003, Beaches Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., with the support of PWS&D's refugee sponsorship office, has sponsored 13 refugees and co-sponsored four more,

On the evening of Nov. 11, 2020, a Syrian refugee family of three arrived at Pearson Airport in Toronto, Ont. This moment marked the end of a long and incredibly arduous jour-

ney—and the beginning of their new life in Canada.

In spring of 2012, Hasan was a staff sergeant in the Syrian Army, leading physical fitness training and marching exercises for soldiers in his unit. When orders came to fire on unarmed anti-government protestors, Hasan deserted. As a result, he was arrested and spent two years in prison where he was severely tortured. Hasan was eventually freed and, against all odds, managed to reunite with his wife, Dua, and young son, Abdaljalil. The family fled to Turkey in early 2015, where the United Nations classified them as refugees.

In the fall of 2015, the Canadian government paired this family with Beaches Presbyterian Church in Toronto, which was told to expect their imminent arrival. Alas, this was not to be. Years of bureaucratic twists and turns—far too many to summa-

rize—followed.

Hasan found part-time work and Abdaljalil began school in Turkey, but the family continued to live in hope of coming to Canada.

Finally, they were approved to travel to Canada and had tickets for March 25, 2020. But disaster struck yet again when the borders were closed due to the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. After another half year of uncertainty, the family finally arrived.

Since then, the family has been busy with the usual activities for newcomers: signing a lease, setting up a bank account, activating cell phones and attending medical appointments. Hasan and Dua have begun online English classes, and Abdaljalil is enrolled in Grade Two. Abdaljalil loves playing in the snow and has even tried ice skating—with great vigour!



Abdaljalil learns to skate his first winter in Canada.

Of course, the family is sad to have left friends and family behind, in both Turkey and Syria. But overall, they are thrilled to be safe and sound in Canada, at long last. And the congregation is delighted to welcome and support them as they begin this new stage of their lives.

PLANNED GIVING



A PCC charitable gift annuity of \$25,000 for an 80-year-old woman provides her an immediate \$7,190 tax receipt and a yearly tax-free income of \$1,520.

By Jim MacDonald, Development Manager for Stewardship & Planned Giving

Did you know that there's a way you can make a charitable gift to the church and ensure a guaranteed income for life?

When you purchase a charitable gift annuity through The Presbyterian Church in Canada, you can leave a legacy to any PCC ministry (Presbyterians Sharing, Presbyterian World Service & Development, PCC camps, theological colleges and/or your congregation). When you acquire the annuity, you'll receive a guaranteed income for life and an immediate charitable donation tax receipt for at least 20% of the annuity's value.

There are two options: a single annuity, which provides an income for yourself, or a joint annuity, which provides life-long income for you and your spouse or sibling.

Here are a few examples: *

Barbara, an 80-year-old woman, worked all her life and has a pension and some savings. Barbara would like to give a gift to her congregation but is concerned about her long-term income for the years ahead. She knows she could leave a gift in her will, but she discovers that buying a PCC charitable gift annuity can allow her to achieve both her goals. Barbara purchases a single annuity for \$25,000, designating her church as the beneficiary. She immediately receives a charitable tax receipt for \$7,189.99 and every year for the rest of her life, she'll receive \$1,520.00. When she dies, the funds remaining in the annuity will go to her congregation. Barbara finds comfort in the knowledge that her gift can help her congregation pursue future ministry dreams.

Robert (78) and Patricia (75) have had a good financial year and they are looking to offset the taxes they will have to pay on some unexpected extra income. They had been talking about making a major gift to the church in their will, but they heard how they can make a gift now with a PCC charitable gift annuity. Patricia calls for a quote and discovers that a \$100,000 joint annuity will provide them with a charitable tax receipt for \$21,697.42, and an annual income of \$4,902 as long as one of them still

lives. Patricia and Robert are pleased that the church should receive at least \$20,000 when they have both passed away, continuing to provide a place where people gather to grow spiritually and work together to share Christ's love with their community and beyond.

Charitable gift annuities are designed to use the interest and capital to pay you an income for life and leave a gift of at least 20% to the char-

ity. You can choose the annuity payment frequency (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually) based on your spending needs. Whether or not tax is payable on the income depends on the age of the annuitant(s) on the day they first obtain the annuity. The income is often completely tax-free for older couples and the tax payable is quite small for younger couples. A couple, where the husband is 69 and the wife is 65 with a \$50,000 annu-

ity, would receive a \$10,000 receipt and an income of \$1,864.68/year, of which the taxable portion is only \$213.29.

By acquiring a gift annuity through The Presbyterian Church in Canada, you can experience the double-blessing of giving and receiving.

For a confidential annuity quote, contact Maggie Leung at 1-800-619-7301 ext. 239, or plannedgiving@presbyterian.ca.

Sample PCC Annuity Quotes

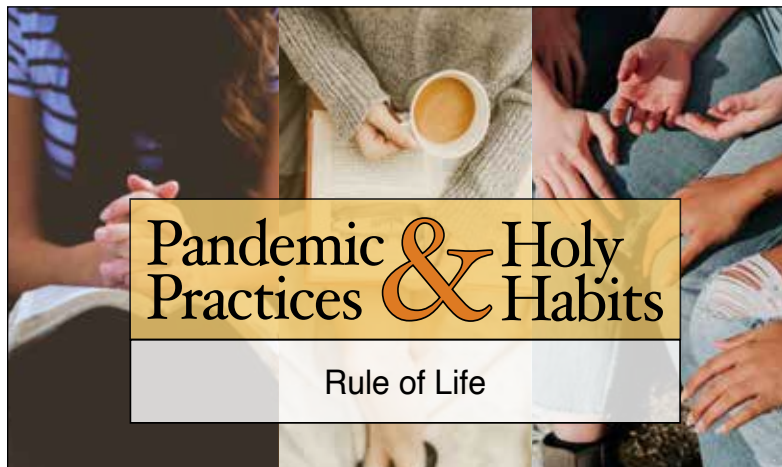
Single Annuity		
Female 80 Annuity: \$25,000.00	Annual Payment: \$1,520.00 Annuity Rate: 6.08%	Taxable Portion: \$0.00 Tax Receipt: \$7,189.99
Joint Annuity		
Female 75, Male 78 Annuity: \$100,000.00	Annual Payment: \$4,902.00 Annuity Rate: 4.90%	Taxable Portion: \$27.58 Tax Receipt: \$21,697.42
Joint Annuity		
Female 65, Male 69 Annuity: \$50,000.00	Annual Payment: \$1,864.68 Annuity Rate: 3.73%	Taxable Portion: \$213.29 Tax Receipt: \$10,000.00

*These quotes were valid until Jan. 26, 2021. Rates will vary depending on when the quote is obtained, the age and gender of the annuitant(s) and whether it is a joint or single annuity. The minimum amount for a PCC annuity is \$10,000, and the annuitant must be 60 to acquire a single annuity and 55 for a joint annuity.

The PCC is a member in good standing of the Canadian Charitable Annuity Association, adhering to the standards and ethics required of members. The Association carefully sets annuity rates based on a professional actuarial firm's calculations and assumptions. Everyone is encouraged to seek independent financial advice before obtaining a gift annuity.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Drawing Closer to God with a “Rule of Life”



By Canadian Ministries

While the pandemic has forced us to be physically distant from one another, it has also shown us how important it is to be spiritually close to each other and God. Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., realized early on during COVID-19 that people needed help drawing closer to God and the Christian community when their habitual ways of doing so—attending worship and faith gatherings in person—were no longer possible.

Drawing on the Rule of Life, an ancient Christian tradition based on weaving spiritual practices into the rhythms and routines of life, the Session launched an online ministry program to knit the community together through common practices. The leaders of this initiative describe it as, “the way we choose to live the life of Jesus together.”

For the Knox community this means:

- a set of common practices that shape daily and weekly living;
- prioritizing relationships;
- practicing saying “no” to things to enable a stronger “yes” to Jesus;
- being open to God’s shaping power.

In essence, the Rule of Life is a support structure that empowers those participating to grow more like Jesus by living a God-focused life rooted in the beauty and mystery of the gospel. While Knox is doing this as a group, it can be something that individuals do on their own, as well. Here are the steps to follow to craft a Rule of Life.

Step 1: Questions

If you are curious about adopting a Rule of Life in 2021, here are a few questions that will help you get started:

1. Where do I feel closest to God?
2. Are there practices that I engage in (e.g., silent prayer, singing, walking, having spiritual conversations with friends) opening me to God’s presence?
3. What are my current practices?
4. What practices pique my interest that I have not yet explored?
5. What areas would I like to change in my life (e.g., finding more time to spend in God’s Word, recognizing that I am a beloved child of God, developing greater generosity, serving God’s people)?

Step 2: Explore Different Spiritual Practices

After reflecting on these questions, create a list of spiritual practices that you feel drawn to. Here are some practices you might consider, but you can also find many others in the resource listed at the bottom of this article:

- Memorizing the psalms
- Reading diverse theological works
- Fasting
- Spending time in silence
- Walking prayers
- Labyrinth walking
- Daily scripture reading
- Finding a prayer partner
- Serving others
- Journaling
- Offering forgiveness
- Singing/listening to sacred or praise music



Step 3: Committing to Specific Practices

After you have spent time prayerfully considering different options, you can commit to three to five practices that you will adopt for an extended period of time. Here is an example of what a Rule of Life might look like:

On a daily basis I commit to:

- Reading scripture for twenty minutes
- Going for a prayer walk
- Listening to the local Christian music station when I drive in my car

On a weekly basis I commit to:

- Giving generously to my church and organizations whose work I support
- Memorizing one psalm

On a monthly basis I commit to:

- Taking a media break one day a month

Everyone’s Rule of Life will be different. The key is to practice it faithfully. As you engage in these practices on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, pay attention to the way that

God is working in your life through them. Is your relationship with Jesus Christ growing? Are you able to walk more faithfully on the path God has set before you? The answers to these questions from those who have already been practicing the Rule of Life consistently will be yes and yes.

To learn more about the Rule of Life:

- *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun
- Knox Presbyterian Church’s Rule of Life website: habituscommunity.org
- Fuller Formation’s Rule of Life course: formation.fuller.edu



Knox Presbyterian Church’s Rule of Life online program was supported through The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s Innovation Grant. To learn more about various funding opportunities, visit presbyterian.ca/funds.

A Covid Christmas at St. Andrew’s Calgary



One of four mitten trees.

By Fiona Swanson, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

Christmas at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., came

without ribbons and without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags...

Well, it actually came with all of those, but up until days before Christmas, we weren’t sure what was going to happen as we waited for decisions from the government as to whether we could get together or not. While had plan A, B and C—and perhaps we ended up doing plan Z—what I do know is that the Spirit was upon us as we welcomed God Incarnate.

The Incarnation by Adam Hamilton and its resources were used in various ways. A Bible study was held two days a week, in advance of worship. An Advent Devotion Booklet was created based on scripture from the study, which went out to every household in the congregation. Each

package also included a 3D-printed Advent Nativity wreath.

The youth, on behalf of TheCreek, a ministry of St. Andrew’s, placed “Mitten Trees” around Southwest Calgary to provide donation opportunities, and also allowed those in need to pick items off the tree.

On Christmas Eve, we had a terrific family service, where families told part of the Christmas story from their homes. We had a Lego stop-action movie, acting, singing and narration by people of all ages. Families then met online to light their candles and sing “Silent Night” together.

The Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services were about welcoming the “Light of the World” and the blessing of family, especially our “Family of God.”

On December 26, we began the “12 Days of Sharing,” where we adapted the song to be a checklist of donated items needed to create food hampers: On the first day of Christmas, I will share with those in need...one bag of pet feed... On the second day of Christmas, I will share with those in need...two bottles of salad dressing... And so on.

In closing our Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season, we had an online Service of Light for a dark world on the evening of the Epiphany.

Like the Grinch, COVID-19 could not steal Christmas: “Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn’t thought of before. What if Christmas means a little bit more?”

Christ incarnated in us so that we may bring his light to the world!



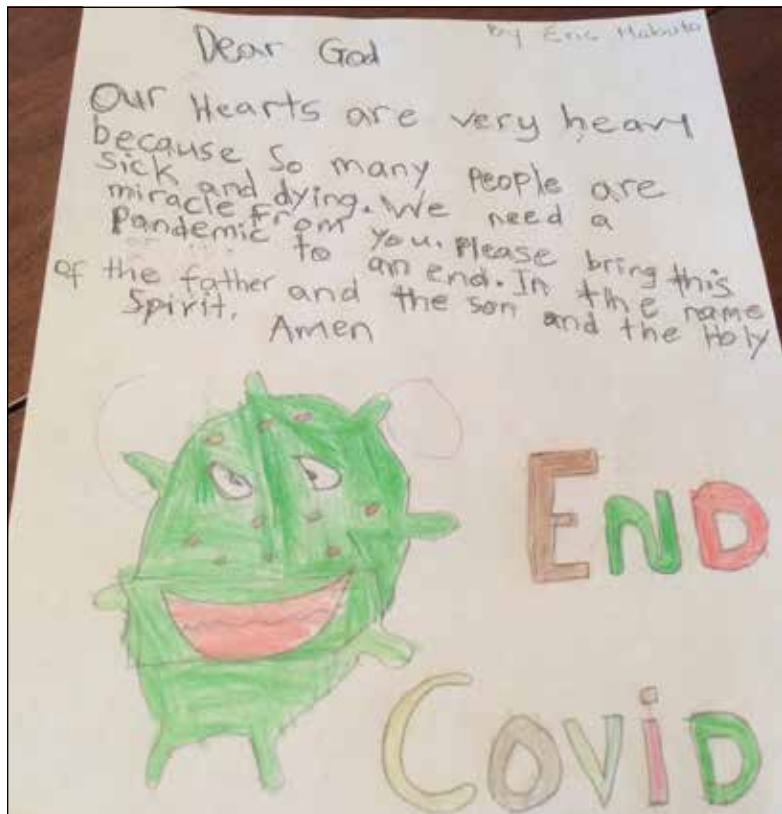
Advent devotional and 3D-printed Nativity.



Online Service of Light.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Christmas Celebrations at Bramalea



A message to God from a child at St. Paul's.

By Lee Janoschak, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont.

This certainly has been a Christmas like none other, and in many ways, it has enabled us to focus on keeping our celebrations simple and sincere.

Since November, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Bramalea, Ont., has been right in the middle of the COVID-19 red zone, or hotspot, or whatever designation government officials are calling it. Early into the new year, we were placed under further restrictions as a "stay-at-home" order was issued. As we shelter at home, Zoom (with the technical expertise of Stacey Molengraaf) has enabled us to gather online for:

Sunday worship and fellowship; Wednesday afternoon Bible study; fireside evening chats; and fun Friday afternoons.

Also online, our music director, Paul Pacanowski, and worship song leader, Shelly Watson, lead us every Sunday right from our own sanctuary. Adding to the emotion of "worshipping together while staying apart," our own choir members lend their voices to the music for our online worship by recording their vocal parts in advance and sending them to Paul who then, painstakingly and lovingly combines them into amazing anthems. This was especially important and appreciated throughout the season of Advent.

Prior to Advent, the Rev. Barb Mo-



Mission & Outreach collection teamwork.

lengraaf procured evergreen boughs, which were packaged, along with candles, Advent readings and activities, into at-home activity kits and were then delivered to our church school families. On the first Sunday afternoon of Advent, the Rev. Barb hosted a special online meeting where she guided children, parents and grandparents in making their very own Advent wreath. We were each encouraged to keep it at our kitchen table and at suppertime, light the corresponding candle and partake in the readings and guided conversations with our family.

On the subject of reaching our young families, the Rev. Barb always has a children's time during our "Zomorphism" services, where she encourages the children through guided, relevant conversation to express their thoughts, prayers or wishes in words or drawings. Then, near the close of the service, they are called back to the screen to share. These children have been an inspiration to us all as, each week, they enthusiastically present to us (and God) their works of art, poems and prose.

Our Christmas Eve service saw many of these children and youth

taking part in the presentation of the Christmas story "live" or pre-recorded. This was followed by an at-home Communion service.

Decorations always add to the Christmas celebrations, and members joyfully participated in the assembling and lighting of our newly purchased crèche for "the whole world to see," as well as in adorning our sanctuary with our traditional tree and Advent banners for all those online.

Gift giving is also a part of Christmas tradition, and our Mission & Outreach members were very active as they collected and gifted grocery gift cards to those in our local community who needed assistance. Our Finance team continued to facilitate the giving of regular and special offerings through our parking lot "trunk collections."

As you can see, even though COVID-19 has closed buildings, it has not closed God's church. Quite the contrary, it has challenged us to be creative, given us new resolve, enabled us to shine a new light in the darkness and poke holes in despair that allow God's glory to illuminate and God's Spirit to blaze!



Our amazing IT hero, Stacey Molengraaf.



Worship leader, Shelly Watson.



Music director, Paul Pacanowski.

The New Normal in Stouffville

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

As with every other church across the land, business has not been "as usual" at St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, Ont. The Main Street church—in the community 45 minutes northeast of downtown Toronto—has been closed since March 2020.

To briefly recap this unusual season of change, since then:

- The congregation has hosted more than 100 online meetings.
- All worship services, includ-

ing the always popular Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services, have been recorded by a skeleton crew of four and shared online. Guest readings are recorded at home, emailed and inserted into the recorded service. A link is distributed via email and social media to members and the community at large every Sunday.

- In response to food insecurity during the pandemic, St. James opened a Little Free Pantry on its front lawn on October 6. Volunteers have noticed increased use

age into the new year.

- St. James held its annual budget meeting last fall. "The power failure in the middle of it reminds us how much we miss in-person meetings!" said the Rev. Joan Masterton.
- Music director, Craig Garnham, recorded and distributed a Christmas concert that featured invited soloists.

Members of St. James Stouffville continue to find ways to worship together and reach out to the community despite these challenging times.



The pews at St. James Presbyterian Church were empty for the recording of the annual Christmas Eve service. PHOTO CREDIT: JIM MASON

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE



Seeing the Spectrum: Ministry During the Pandemic

By the Rev. Tim Purvis,
Associate Secretary,
Ministry and Church Vocations

In the spring of 2020, national church office staff began to attempt to call the ministries, clerks of presbytery and clerks of synod to hear how things were going and how people were doing in this difficult time.

The more than 969 ministries and clerks were divided into call lists given to participating members of the national church office staff. Calls began in late April and continued until after Christmas. The responses covered a broad spectrum. Some congregations were doing remarkably well and found creative ways to meet the challenges of the times. Other congregations were struggling and deeply concerned about their future. Some ministers were coping well with stress and adapting to ministry under difficult circumstances. Others were dealing with exhaustion, burnout, depression and health issues brought on by unprecedented ministry demands. As one of our ministers put it, “Some things are flying; others are dying.”

What Did We Hear?

In the initial few weeks, we heard much anxiety and uncertainty. We noted how a general shift occurred around the three-month mark. Before that time, many accepted temporary arrangements, assuming the pandemic health restrictions would end soon and that things would return to normal.

After three months, the realization set in that we were in it for the long haul. We were in a marathon, not a sprint, and needed to adapt accordingly. We heard anxiety about financial concerns. “How long can we

continue without the offerings and donations coming in? Will we have to close the church permanently?” Ministers and congregations were shifting their focus to the most immediate and pressing priorities.

We noticed a progression as ministers and congregations transitioned to the “new normal.” The first round of questions we heard mainly had to do with how to move worship services online. Staff from the Life and Mission Agency worked to prepare online resources and to respond to questions and provide technical assistance to ministers and congregations. This was quickly followed by a second round of questions concerning financial issues: “How do we gather offerings? How do we set up a donation portal on our church website? What do we do if we have to cut back the hours of, or lay off, our church staff?” Again, staff prepared resources and offered guidance and technical assistance.

Then we started to get questions about “usual” church matters. Session and presbytery clerks and committee chairpersons asked about how to hold meetings online. Interim moderators asked about the mechanics of a search-and-call process to fill a pulpit vacancy. At this point it was evident clergy and congregations were beginning to adapt to ministry in what was becoming “the new normal.”

The Shift to Online Worship

Many congregations chose early on to offer their Sunday services online, following the closure of their church buildings to public worship. Not all congregations were able to do this. Typically, the congregations with the human, financial and infrastructure resources were able to make the shift

to online worship. Not every congregation had people with gifts and technical expertise. Not every congregation had the funds to purchase HD cameras, computers and other electronic equipment. Congregations in rural and remote areas frequently lacked access to reliable high-speed Internet service.

Congregations offering online services expected to see a decline in attendance. Most reported to their surprise an increase in attendance, sometimes well above that of in-person Sunday services. This prompted the obvious question, “Who are they?” While it was not always possible to discover who the attendees were, many congregations were able to determine they came from the following groups:

- The “Only Game in Town” people – if everything else is closed, what else are we going to do on a Sunday morning but go to church?
- The “Home Church” people – those who had moved away but still maintained a connection to their home church and were now able to attend services online, regardless of where they lived.
- Elderly and infirm members – people who were unable to physically come to worship at their church but who could participate online.
- The “Housecoat and Slippers” people – those who opted for the convenience of worshipping in the comfort of their own homes.
- The “Tire Kickers” – church shoppers flitting from service to service, though many congregations saw this as an opportunity for evangelism and outreach!
- Members from other congregations not holding online services of their own.
- Family members of the minister and elders.
- Those who were hurt by the church but still needed what the church had to offer, online attendance was safe for them.
- Those for whom the church building was a place of recent loss; for instance, a church funeral, online worship was a way to ease back into community life.

This common congregational experience of increased attendance at online services, because they were reaching people who weren’t being reached through in-person services, resulted in an emerging consensus: some online worship presence would have to continue after “normality” returned, even though provision of both online worship and in-person worship would be demanding on clergy and lay worship planners and leaders.

Pastoral Care Issues

The inability to offer a ministry of presence was identified as a core pastoral care issue. This prompted theological reflection on what it meant to be the church as the body of Christ when we cannot be physically present to each other. Keeping members connected proved challenging as congregations experimented with online Bible study and prayer groups, virtual coffee hours and creative online programs for children and youth. The sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion were postponed; some congregations held Communion services adapted for a video conferencing format. Visits to members in hospitals, long-term care facilities and palliative care units were at best severely restricted, and at worst not permitted at all. We heard painful accounts of ministers who could not call on elderly members living alone, which only added to their isolation; and ministers who could not visit dying members in their final hours. Funerals proved especially difficult. In some cases, funerals could not be held at all and had to be postponed, depriving grieving families of the physical support of their clergy and congregations. Ministers struggled with enormous pressure not to follow public health restrictions when their pastoral instinct was to provide some measure of in-person presence in times of loss.

Another central pastoral care issue was the general sense of grief and loss experienced not just by congregations and clergy, but by the entire community. Everyone was missing the various ways we gathered together, not just as families and friends, but as a society as sporting events, community festivals, parades and other shared cultural events were cancelled. Major milestones like birthdays, anniversaries and graduations could not be celebrated in the usual ways, if at all. Significant planned events like family vacations and weddings were postponed or cancelled outright. Important holidays and annual traditions became casualties of the pandemic. Even ordinary routines and simple tasks were disrupted. A simple trip to the grocery store required more time and effort as all were required to wear masks and line up outside where the number of people permitted in buildings was restricted.

The collective grief and loss of all things normal affected everyone. Congregations and clergy faced the challenge of offering hope and encouragement even as they managed their own losses and their own grief.

Self-Care Issues

A number of ministers indicated they were going through a kind of voca-

tional mini-crisis in the early months of the pandemic when public services of worship were cancelled and other congregational activities suspended. With no services, no visitation, no meetings or congregational programs, some clergy wondered, “What do I do as a minister when I can’t do the tasks of ministry for which I trained? What do I do with my week? How do I justify my stipend, especially if the congregation has had to cut back the custodian’s hours or lay off the music director?”

A kind of “works righteousness” crept in as ministers felt the pressure to be doing something, *anything*, to be productive and “earn their keep.” It was often a challenge to gain perspective, set priorities, trust God and learn on a daily basis to live by grace. The ministers who were coping relatively well during the pandemic identified one or more of the following factors as being important in their ministerial self-care:

- Attention to significant personal connections with others: spouse/partner, family, friend.
- Attention to proper diet, exercise and sleep.
- Building in Sabbath times of rest and renewal: taking days off and vacations, enjoying hobbies.
- Collegial support: regular online gatherings with trusted colleagues to share the joys and challenges of ministry in a time of pandemic, and to realize they were not alone because they were all facing the same issues and challenges.
- The practice of spiritual disciplines: prayer, meditation, scripture reading, or other ways of nourishing their souls and restoring their spirits.

Summing Up: The Spectrum

Conversations revealed a spectrum of experiences during the pandemic. At one end of the spectrum, we heard about challenge and pain. We heard from clergy who were exhausted, burned out and wondering, “How long, O Lord?” We heard from ministers who were struggling with physical and mental health issues, and who were using the anonymous counselling services provided by the Employee Assistance Program offered to professional church workers through the Pension and Benefits office. We heard from congregations that were struggling, especially smaller, more elderly, and rural or remote congregations who were wondering, “Will the burning bush go out on our watch?” And we heard how difficult it was to be the minister in a struggling pastoral charge, dealing with a sense of failure, especially when other congre-

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Wrapping Up 2020 at Armour Heights

By Erin Stone, Church Administrator & Manager of Community Engagement, Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., had a pretty busy Advent and Christmas season with some special programming that included a series called "Merry Covid Christmas."

This online programming also had: a Christmas biscotti baking event; an Advent wreath making event; a four-part Advent-themed yoga class; a two-part Bible study called "How Well Do You Know the Christmas Story?"; a Christmas "open mic"; a live-streamed concert with our Armour Heights soloists and music director; a Christmas pageant (with about 60 participants!); and



Worship service participants from our live-streamed Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.



Our Christmas Angels team "wrap party" assembling gifts for ARISE and families in our community.

a very special poem written by our clerk of Session called "A Visit from COVID-19."

In addition to this, we volunteered at the Evangel Hall Mission Residents Dinner, crafted a new pulpit fall and held numerous other online events, including a youth baking event, our

Christmas Eve service and Christmas Angels "wrap party."

Despite the lockdown and the ongoing pandemic, it's been a busy and active time at Armour Heights.

Our past events are available at armourheights.org/merry-covid-christmas



"A COVID Christmas" concert photo.



Youth online "cinnamon bun baking event" with the Rev. Rebecca Jess and Vanessa Horne.



Online Christmas Bazaar in Uxbridge

By Irene Dimanis, Treasurer, St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont.

The Ladies Association of St. Andrew's-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge, Ont., holds a Christmas bazaar in November each year. Due to COVID-19, I came up with an idea of doing a first-ever virtual bazaar on a much smaller scale for 2020, and asked our President, Bonnie, if this was feasible.

We ended up making up a flyer of all the items available for purchase with the names of people to contact by email or phone for the item(s)

of their choice. The flyer was then emailed and sent by mail to the congregation with the date and location for pickup outside the church entrance.

It was a very successful initiative! We donated the funds raised to Evangel Hall Mission, Kenora Fellowship Centre, Precious Minds, Jennifer Ashleigh Children's Charity, Angel Tree and Crieff Hills Retreat Centre. It was a different experience for a bazaar, but as our ladies' group always works together so well, it turned out amazingly, and our congregation loved being able to purchase some of the items they buy every year.

Continued from page 36

gations were doing comparatively well.

At the other end of the spectrum, we heard about blessings and signs of hope. We heard remarkable stories of congregational and ministerial creativity and resilience. We heard that new leadership was emerging or long-serving leadership was being revitalized in many congregations. We heard that reliance on online con-

nections resulted in the collapse of physical distances as interim moderators were able to expand their pool of supply preachers for online services, and that presbytery boundaries became permeable as clergy in one part of the country provided assistance and support in other parts.

The journey through this pandemic is not over yet. Jeremiah's advice to the exiles to set down roots because

they were going to be living in Babylon for a while is applicable to us today:

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce.... For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give

you a future with hope" (Jer. 29:4-5, 11).

We cannot know what the world will be like, or what the church will be like, on the other side of the pandemic. The glimpses we have already hint that much will be changed, and much will have to change. In the meantime, we journey from memory to hope, from that which was to that which will be, as God's own future unfolds.



Presbyterians Sharing encourages and supports congregations through times of change.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Christmas and Covid in Collingwood

By Marlene Weatherall, First Presbyterian Church in Collingwood, Ont.

First Presbyterian Church in Collingwood, Ont., is thankful for the ability to continue to carry out our purpose to share the good news of Jesus Christ, as we live out our faith through worship, Christian education, youth ministry and mission to both local and global communities.

When COVID-19 restrictions were set in place in March 2020, gathering as a congregation was no longer possible. A team of volunteers gathered to develop and implement protocols to sanitize the church building and make the sanctuary safe for those participating in the live-streamed Sunday services. YouTube links for the live-streamed services are made

available each week on the church's website, Facebook and Instagram, and are joined by a large following. The expertise of Jansje and Denman Lawrenson has been instrumental in making this a reality.

The Director of Pastoral Care, Catherine Brown, communicates weekly through electronic messages, telephone chats and physically distanced visits (at individual requests). The weekly e-communications include prayer requests, announcements, inspirational scriptures and recognition to those who have birthdays or special occasions. Catherine's 70-person team of pastoral care visitors ensure that those in their care are reached regularly. This connection has been greatly appreciated.

The Director of Youth & Family Ministries, along with a volunteer

youth leader, have created a new initiative: TGN (The Good News). This weekly news-style video is approximately 10 minutes long, includes a Bible verse, a "joke news" section, a weather report from a Children & Youth volunteer, highlights from the church, and features kids of all ages and their "good news." The recordings are posted each week on the Youth Group YouTube channel, the Children & Youth Facebook page, and the Children's Ministry section of our website. The goal is to share and celebrate the good things happening in the lives of our church family in a fun way. Children and youth also receive opportunities to meet for interactive lessons, Bible study and games online each week.

Community dinners continue to be offered monthly as a "take-out" meal. There is no cost and approximately 80–100 people receive a nutritious, home-cooked meal.

Each Wednesday in November and part of December, we connected with the church family and community at large for an hour of outdoor Family Worship. While remaining in a "Family Pod," physically distanced in the parking lot, we offered outdoor worship with music and prayer that was fun for all ages.

When the weather turned colder, we moved into the sanctuary and

celebrated Advent with music. While adhering to COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines, we gathered safely in the sanctuary to hum our favourite Christmas carols under the leadership of our music director, Kimberley Raeburn-Gibson.

The Christmas Hamper Ministry this year helped families enjoy the Christmas season that otherwise would not have had the means to do so. Twenty-eight church families prepared 38 baskets for 106 people in these families. Another 30 families received gift cards and a local school in need was supported, as well.

We were very excited about our virtual presentation of the First Christmas Story on our YouTube channel. Even though we couldn't invite people into the church, we knew that our live-streamed presentation was powerful and brought the Spirit of Emmanuel into the lives of all the people who watched. The presentation was complete with a 50+ voice First Christmas Story virtual choir, youth chorus and instrumentalists, interwoven with narration to share the simple message of Christmas to those at home.

We started the 2021 year with an inspirational message from the Rev. Tim Raeburn-Gibson. The benediction was an original song by the Rev. Tim.

God's Gonna Do it Again

The Rev. Tim Raeburn-Gibson

When I look back on the year I had
Some ups and some downs,
some helping hands,
Happy New Year, God's gonna do it again

I have friends and family and good times to keep
I have a fridge in the kitchen and a warm place to sleep
Happy New Year, 'cause God's going to do it again

I have hope for the future, for all the days ahead
'Cause I know that you love me, just as Jesus did
Happy New Year, God's gonna do it again

Love is patient, love is kind
And love forgives, time after time
Happy New Year, 'cause God's going to do it again

If I invite you in, if you invite me in
miracles will happen, again and again
Happy New Year, 'cause God's gonna do it again

Happy New Year, 'cause you are gonna do it
We are gonna do it
God's gonna do it again



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Rolling Forward in Bolsover

By Elaine Anderson, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Bolsover, Ont.

The year 2020 delivered devastating news of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has held us back in so many ways ever since St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Bolsover, Ont., was closed on March 22 for regular church services. Mandatory physical distancing and mask wearing were definitely obstacles to overcome. Going forward, we asked ourselves, how can we meet to worship our Lord? There must be a road from here!

On Sunday, June 21, a 1946 John Deere B tractor pulling a 16-foot float, arrived on our church property along with flowers, a podium and an FM transmitter. This quaint set-up gave folks in their cars the ability to tune their radios to 90.5 FM and listen to music and the message for the day. It was a wonderful way to celebrate the Word in beautiful natural surroundings. We'd done it!

With a few small hurdles to overcome, church services started happening again at St. Andrew's. Numbers were few in the beginning, but as word got around, more and more cars drove up to our "Drive-In Church Service." We were able to fill our pulpit weekly with our interim moderator the Rev. Caleb Kim, the Rev. Bob Quick, Youth and Family Ministry pastor Shannon Shearer and pulpit supplies Wayne Simpson, Ray Coker,

Beth Ann Kenny, Cecil Rosenberger and Brian Anderson. Thank you all for contributing to our weekly drive-in services.

We continued drive-in church services throughout the summer and fall months, enjoying the weather and the Word. Inclement weather challenged us at times, so clear vinyl sides were attached to the float to keep the wind, rain and snow at bay. We managed for several weeks until it was suggested that we move to the area at the front entrance to the church, where it would be warmer for everyone, and allow our organist, Shirley Mueller, to have a suitable place (just inside the front doors) to set up her keyboard.

By November 29, Advent was upon us. We knew we couldn't use real candles in our Advent wreath outside, so Brian and Elaine Anderson created a large wooden candelabra using coloured light bulbs large enough for people in their cars to see from a distance. For our Advent services, readers had been assigned to read the weekly liturgies and to "turn on" the appropriate light bulb (it was electric). It was very bright and it lit up the area nicely on dull days.

The Rev. Bob Quick, from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Lindsay, came to lead us in Communion on Sunday, December 6. You might wonder how we did this from the inside of our cars. All congregants



Rosemary Watson (left) and Elaine Anderson.

were asked the week before to bring their own elements and at the appropriate time, consume them.

It was a cold day, so things moved along quickly. During the service, we noticed that it was getting difficult for the Rev. Bob to turn the pages, so it was decided that we would stop our outdoor services at the end of Advent on Dec. 20. The Rev. Bob did not object to this idea, joking with us about the situation.

It was a peaceful and solemn time spent in the beautiful setting of our little church in the pines. It gave me a glimpse of what our ancestors must have gone through to bring their parishioners together to worship the Lord. And they all said: "It was good."

Christmas Outreach

St. Andrew's Bolsover has supported a Christmas Family every year for the past five years. Our local elementary school is in Kirkfield, about five miles east of Bolsover. Each year, we are given a family (name unknown) to support for Christmas. In the past,



Celebrating the Word with help from a tractor and car radios at St. Andrew's.

we have supplied food items for Christmas breakfast and dinner, snack items and gifts for the family.

This year, however, we were not allowed to purchase food or clothing. Instead of food and clothing, gift cards were purchased. Through our church's generosity, we were able to support three families. Wow! We gave each family \$275 in gift cards. We received a thank-you from the school for our generous support once again.



BOOK REVIEW

A Review of *Finding Heartstone*

By the Rev. Brian Fraser, Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Burnaby, B.C.

Finding Heartstone: A Taste of Wilderness

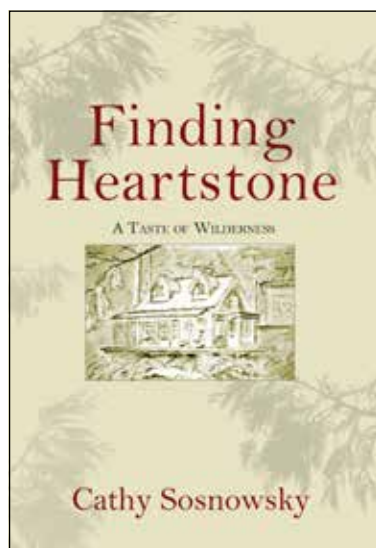
Written by Cathy Sosnowsky
Caitlin Press, 2020.

This book is about grief felt deeply. I want you to read it. I pray these observations will encourage you to do that. Then pass it on or recommend it to others.

The author, Cathy Sosnowsky, taught English at Langara College in Vancouver for many years. She has published poetry, memoirs and

opinion pieces. She is active in leadership with West Vancouver Presbyterian Church, B.C., leading a faith study group as well as coordinating the communications team. Cathy's Christian faith does not show up explicitly in this book (it does in her first memoir, *Snapshots: A Story of Love, Loss and Life*), but its resilience underlies every line.

The grief that fills this book has to do with the loss of one child to a freak fatal accident and two children to addiction. These losses are not only endured with remarkable resilience, but also observed with a deep compassion for herself, her family and others



who are living with such traumas. The death of her son, Alex, elicited a moving collection of poems (*Holding On: Poems for Alex*) and worldwide leadership in an organization called Com-

passionate Friends that offers support for bereaved parents. All of the sensitive soul-searching that has happened over those 20 years infuses this book.

Cathy picks up on a theme that is pervasive in Canadian literature—the healing power of the wilderness. This particular wilderness is on an island off the coast of British Columbia, owned by the "idealistic and sensible" Hemming Bay Community on East Thurlow Island. That cooperative has flourished for over 40 years now. We're treated to an eloquent account of how, after the death of Alex, Cathy's husband, Woldy, and his brother constructed, mainly by hand, a home in that wilderness.

You won't find easy answers to getting over loss in this book. That's because grief doesn't work that way. You will, however, find an articulate awareness of what it means to live

with grief through all of its ups and downs. You will also find a witness to the power of the presence of God in and through other people who care, all in their unique fumbling ways.

And you will find recipes. I've tried some and they're really good. My personal favourite, weird as it seems, is Standby Corned Beef Hash (p. 75), made from corned beef and served with loads of ketchup. As I tasted my versions of her recipes in our North Vancouver condo, I imagined what that comfort food might have tasted like at Heartstone in that wilderness land so filled with lament.

I trust these glimpses of the rich wisdom that fill this book have stimulated a taste for reading it. You will not be disappointed. Deep gratitude to Cathy for sharing her soul with such eloquence. Please read, ponder, and pass it on.

REFLECTIONS

Anchored to Jesus in an Uncertain World



By The Rev. Dr. Clyde Ervine, retired minister from Knox Presbyterian Church in St. Catharines, Ont., and adjunct professor at Knox College in Toronto

"We have an anchor that keeps the soul; steadfast and sure while the billows roll; fastened to the rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Saviours' love."

My brother Ian, recuperating from COVID-19, continues to cope with cancer. Similar grim situations are currently being endured across the globe, accompanied, at least in Canada, with an increasingly darker mood. In the early months of the coronavirus pandemic, we heard various politicians say, "we're all in this together"; but since, in spite of guidelines discouraging non-essential travel, some of our politicians enjoyed international vacations over the Christmas holidays, we're clearly not "all in this together." It's thus no surprise that it's proving difficult for politicians to keep on convincing the public to follow guidelines that limit freedom of movement.

To make matters worse, though vaccines to combat COVID-19 are now available, the pace of vaccination across Canada seems slow, even as daily COVID-19 cases continue, leading in this second year of pandemic to a troubling loss of certainty about the future. Of course, the future has always been and always will be uncertain; as the apostle Paul noted long ago, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Yet true as that is, most people, most of the time, approach the future they can't yet see with a good deal of confidence. Not in 2021!

Though we hope that global and national economies will survive the coronavirus tsunami and that new vaccines will protect us from the virus's many mutations, we're not

quite certain, sensing that outcomes aren't as reliable as we once thought them to be. Meanwhile, most folk can't go to work, go to school, operate their business, eat out, go to a concert, attend public worship or meet with friends. More than anything, I feel sad that I can't visit my brother in England.

If I sound negative, let me counteract that by celebrating the massive commitment undertaken by all those working to alleviate our uncertainties—researchers who have swiftly developed new vaccines, the unceasing dedication of frontline health workers, the huge efforts of governments to mitigate financial hardship, the adaptivity and orderliness of food supply chains, and the sacrificial way in which the vast majority of people continue to respect and endure restrictions. Compassion and concern for others has made the pandemic more bearable than it would otherwise be. Yet we're haunted by the gnawing fear that life may not soon, or ever, return to normal.

In view of how untethered and unpredictable life now feels, Christians rightly seek a word from God that will be a lamp to our uncertain feet and a light to our unprecedented path. I confess, however, that the first biblical words that come to mind reinforce rather than remove my fears for the future. I think of the repeated cry, "vanity of vanities! All is vanity," from a seemingly skeptical preacher (Ecclesiastes 1:2), or Jesus calling the man foolish, who, having built his house on sand, later saw it destroyed by floods and winds (Matthew 7:26).

Then there's the bleak word "wilderness," used in the four gospel accounts of John the Baptist warning his generation of its need to repent. Matthew 3:1, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:2 and John 1:23 all report that to hear John, people had to leave their comfort, convenience and certainties behind, and head into the wilderness, a fierce, forbidding location that Jews tried hard to avoid. And yet it must also be said that the wilderness had often been a place where God met the people of Israel and renewed Israel. It proved to be so again in the days of John the Baptist, for in the Judean wilderness, people, removed from their normal, everyday lives, heard God's Word from John. If so, maybe our fear that all our vaunted human resources may not be able to rid us of the coronavirus will lead us

to find ultimate hope for the future, not in human resources, beneficial though they certainly are, but in God.

Biblical words like "vanity," "foolish" and "wilderness" suggest the need for us to re-evaluate our lives. But I also believe strongly that the God whom we delight to name as Shepherd and as Father has more encouraging words to give us in this moment—the Bible is full of them.

One such word that's been in my mind in recent days is the word, "anchor," even though it appears in the New Testament once only. It's a positive word that symbolized hope in ancient times and was used visually as such by Christians in the early centuries of the church; today, it isn't as popularly used. I, however, was introduced to the word "anchor" when I joined the Boys' Brigade at age eight! The Boys' Brigade, an organization with roots in the muscular Christianity of late Victorian Britain, has now faded in Canada, but not in Ulster where I grew up. Its emblem is an anchor, and its motto, "steadfast and sure," comes from the hymn, "Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?"—a hymn that, as boys, we sang lustily. That hymn, the chorus of which I quoted to open this reflection, is based on the New Testament's sole use of the word "anchor," in Hebrews 6:19–20: "We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered."

The word "anchor" that the Boys' Brigade and so many generations of Christians have found meaningful, seems so applicable, appropriate and appealing in the face of our current pandemic. Its striking use in Hebrews 6:19–20 makes the point that if a ship can be saved, protected and preserved from storms so long as it's tethered to the massive weight of an anchor, so can those who face the storms of life (including a pandemic) who are tethered to Jesus.

Among the lessons that the coronavirus pandemic is teaching us is that human life is less certain than we'd like it to be. Ours is, we proudly imagine, an advanced technological world; yet it's a world with limits—limited health resources, limited financial resources, limited scientific and epidemiological knowledge, limited time and, I might add, limited hope. But in forcing us to acknowl-



Jesus Christ, our great high priest, anchor and forerunner, who has redeemed us and is in the midst of restoring us, tethers us to a God without limits. In him we're forever secure and safe.



edge life's uncertainty and limits, the current pandemic offers us the opportunity to discover that Jesus is, as Hebrews 6:19–20 claims and the Boys' Brigade hymn celebrates, an immovable anchor whom no storm or pandemic can dislodge or destroy.

Throughout his short life, Jesus endured terrible temptation and trials, was abandoned by both the justice system of his day and his closest disciples, and finally endured the suffering and shame of the cross. However, and this is the claim that underpins Christian scripture, sacraments and song, "God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:24). This staggering claim so seized the disciples who abandoned Jesus that they were totally transformed by it, ready to die in order to witness to Jesus, the Lord of life. The same staggering claim about Jesus led Hebrews 6:19 to liken him to an anchor who tethers us to God.

At least two points flow from the above assertion. First: Christians need an anchor because we're not spared life's storms. This point may seem obvious; yet some Christians keep hoping for the sort of divine preferential treatment that will enable them to escape the storms that trouble the rest of humanity: "Our faith," they say, "will save us from having to endure trouble." In response to such thinking, I simply note that there's little in the Bible to support it and much to contradict it. After all, what prompted the author of Hebrews 6:19–20 to apply the image of the anchor to Jesus was surely the fact that Christians at that time, suffering severe hostility from the Roman Empire, needed to know that in uncertain, insecure times, they were anchored to God through Jesus.

Second, Hebrews 6:19–20 points those living in uncertain, insecure

times, not to general doctrines of God's love or sovereignty, vital though such doctrines are, but specifically to the accomplished, ongoing ministry of Jesus. This is what the Book of Hebrews articulates. As God's incarnate Son, through whom God has spoken to us, Jesus is "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being" (1:3) who was made "like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest" (2:17), who "in every respect has been tested as we are" (4:15), and who "offered himself" for our sins (7:27). Hebrews then goes on to celebrate what the crucified, risen and exalted Jesus means to us in these words: he's our "sure and steadfast anchor," having entered "the inner shrine behind the curtain... a forerunner on our behalf" (6:19–20).

The words, "the inner shrine behind the curtain" sound obscure, but not to those who know that the Old Testament identifies the inner shrine of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem as the Holy of Holies. On the Day of Atonement, held annually, the Jewish High Priest was permitted to enter and make a sin-offering in that shrine, a separated place "behind the curtain" understood to be God's earthly dwelling place. But why does Hebrews mention such details? Because its author sees the Jewish sacrificial system as preparatory for the infinitely superior, sacrificial ministry of Jesus, who sacrificed not animal blood, but his own (9:12), whose sacrifice for sin obtained "eternal redemption" such that no other sacrifices for sin would ever be needed (9:12), and

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REFLECTIONS

Zooming with Santa



Five-year-old Cayden and Santa meeting online just prior to Christmas.

By Bruce Templeton, Clerk of Session at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in St. John's N.L., member of the PCC Trustee Board and Investment Advisory Committee

Bruce Templeton and his family, who live in Newfoundland, have assisted Santa Claus for the past 42 years and have brought the joy and hope of Christmas to countless children with more than 1,500 Santa Claus visits. Bruce holds the honour of being one of only three Canadians to be inducted into the International Santa Claus Hall of Fame.

Last year, when the seriousness of the pandemic became clear and all gatherings became online meetings, Bruce and his family realized that things were different, and that Christmas would present unique challenges to the tradition of meeting Santa at Christmastime. Nevertheless, Santa and his helpers rose to the challenge and organized a way to meet with children across Canada—virtually.

There are, I believe, three levels of professional Santa Clauses. The first/starting level is the seasonal performer. The second level comes after years of experience, countless

upgrades of Santa attire and study of the history and lore of Christmas. Who knew, for example, that the nine reindeer who carry Santa around in his sleigh on Christmas Eve are all females?

Mrs. Claus is not surprised by this at all and reminds Santa annually that nine males would get lost and certainly run out of energy before the job was complete!

Those at the second level are able to listen, not only to children's wants and wishes, but also to their tough questions that need to be answered. Those who can answer the tough questions graduate to the third level of doing the work of St. Nicholas where one brings peace, hope and acceptance in very difficult times.

This year, one such question came from a nine-year-old girl who was set to receive a special Zoom call from Santa at Christmastime. In preparation for the online calls, parents were asked to "whisper in Santa's ear" so that Santa was "in the know" in advance of the call. Her mother wrote: "Santa, your call to my daughter is really important this Christmas. Her dad cannot get home from Brazil where he is working. Our family has had a tough year. Our son died of cerebral palsy at age 16. As well, we

lost our family cat in February and our dog in August. My daughter will only ask you one question on the call. It is, 'Santa, do you see my brother in heaven?'"

This type of question is not unusual and needs to be thought through very carefully. I often rely on my wife, Mrs. Claus, for help in thinking of an appropriate response.

Preparing Santa's set-up for the calls began in the summer. Mrs. Claus was just a little surprised when the elves showed up with a gallon of Chroma Key green paint and painted one of the basement walls to work as a green screen. A lighting system from the local community channel was also set up and the Internet connection was strengthened by switching from a wireless connection to a direct connection to the router so that Santa's visits would not be interrupted by a slow Wi-Fi connection. I then embarked on a whole new adventure learning OBS (Open Broadcaster Software), a video recording program with tools that make it possible for the North Pole, the toyshop, the conservatory with the northern lights, and snowfall to be shown on the green screen in the background. And then I hunted down the right webcam.

In the weeks that led up to Christmas, I did Zoom calls with five local schools where teachers went class to class, a few churches in Toronto and some of the families of my colleagues. There were six hours of visiting with the CNIB children in Newfoundland and Labrador, and two-hour sessions with the families of the John Howard Society and Ronald McDonald House. On Christmas Eve, Santa did a Zoom call with the Intensive Care Department of the children's hospital and tried not only to cheer up the children and their families but add a little joy to the amazing professionals who work diligently through the night.



Santa and his nine-year-old friend feeding the ducks and talking together.

When it came time for the nine-year-old girl to receive her visit from Santa, provincial health guidelines made it permissible to meet in person outdoors, so Santa arranged to meet her safely outdoors with her mother instead. Near where they live, there is a small pond with ducks. The family has erected a bench in memory of their son, who they used to take there in his wheelchair. Santa, safely masked and with a big bag of duck food in hand, met her and her mother there, and together we fed the ducks. We then sat on the bench and I told her the story of the Saint who would become Santa Claus.

We chatted about a young boy her age whose parents had died and was brought up by a church. He gave his money to those who needed it and had started by putting coins in three young girls' stockings. The young boy went on to become St. Nicholas.



las. I told my little friend that every time she came to this place, she would remember her brother and St. Nicholas. As we were getting ready to leave, my little friend gave Santa a big hug.

"Thank you, Santa, that is all I needed to know for Christmas. I know now that my brother is safe with St. Nicholas." Then she pointed out into the pond at the gaggle of ducks and said, "Look Santa, there are two white ones. I wonder if they are my brother and Nicholas."

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who entered not the Holy of Holies "behind the curtain" in Jerusalem's temple, a "sanctuary made by human hands," but "heaven itself, [where he now appears] in the presence of God on our behalf" (9:24), securing anchorage for us.

The Hebrews 6:19 image of Jesus as our anchor, though it occurs only once, lies within a larger discussion of his role as the One who mediates the gulf between sinful humans and a holy God (2:17, 4:14, 6:20, 7:26, 10:21). Jesus thus links, connects or tethers us to God, just as an anchor

links, connects or tethers a ship to a firm foundation. This anchoring ministry of our mediator is further elaborated by the word, "forerunner," in Hebrews 6:20. Just as an advance party of forerunners might go ahead to ensure that it's safe for the rest of an army to move forward, so Jesus our forerunner opened, pioneered or cleared for us a way to God, having overcome all temptations and conquered the power of both sin and death. Being fully God but also fully human, the exalted Jesus thus represents us before God. Anchored to

him, we can know peace and confidence, even in a world that makes us fearful and uncertain.

In the coming months, we will join millions around the globe in praying that the coronavirus pandemic will be wiped out by a combination of social distancing, good health practices and appropriate vaccines, encouraged by the fact that our world has faced larger pandemics in the past and recovered. But as we wait, we ought also to be reassured that God is for us and not against us, and that we need fear neither the God of the

universe nor the crises that come our way, for Jesus Christ, our great high priest, anchor and forerunner, who has redeemed us and is in the midst of restoring us, tethers us to a God without limits. In him we're forever secure and safe.

I close with some words from a song written by Graham Kendrick, "No Need to Fear." You can find it beautifully sung by Sylvia Burnside, accompanied by the New Irish Choir and Orchestra, recorded in St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. See: [youtube.com/watch?v=KkabiFolhDg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkabiFolhDg).

*No need to fear
When times of trouble come
Oppression's storm beats at your door
No need to fear.
No need to fear.
Though evil seems so strong
Their pride and power is not for long
Be still my soul and trust in God
And place your life into his hands
For he will never fail you
And in the morning, you'll see his face
No need to fear—don't fear.*

REFLECTIONS

The Seasons of Change

By Vivian Ketchum, originating from Wauzhushk 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

I start my day with coffee in hand sitting in my recliner in my living room. The City of Winnipeg is under Code Red restrictions and people are advised to stay home if they can. My world is now the four walls of my home. Figuratively speaking.

It is early morning and the front view of my window faces a busy street. I watch the rush-hour traffic begin as the sun rises. Buses rumble by and stop outside my building. I have noticed there are less passengers lately. As the sun rises even further, I hear the sound of children outside my window. There is a school right across the street. Sadly, not as many children heading to school as last year. My cat jumps up to the window to watch the children walking by. This is his favourite part of the day.

My coffee is done and the morning rush is now over. Time to have breakfast. I head to the back part of my place where my kitchen is. My cat follows me knowing it is breakfast time. I make my cereal and open a can of cat food for my cat. Before we can settle down for our breakfast, I hear a noise outside the back window by the kitchen. My cat runs and jumps up to the window. I watch to see how my cat reacts to the noise. If he hisses and runs, there is possibly danger outside. My cat is showing signs of curiosity, so I go over to look out the back window. It is my young neighbour who has visitors. There is also a home support worker dropping off meals for residents in the next building. The residents are elderly and are not able to go out due to their health. It is a mixed bag of reactions to the pandemic restrictions. The youth and his constant

stream of visitors. The elderly residents who are confined to their home due to their health and vulnerability. I turn around to have my breakfast and leave my cat's breakfast on the floor.

It is now noon and time for me to get ready for work. I head to the dining room where my home office is set in the corner by the window. I have been working from home since March of last year, when my office moved all its employees to remote home offices. Before I settle, I see the bylaw vehicle outside my window. It is the bylaw officer walking around the area. No, he was not ticketing cars, but checking the stores in the area. Making sure the store owners

were following the Code Red restrictions. Allowing the limited number of people in the stores.

So much has changed in the last year. People gradually wearing masks everywhere. Buses and stores. Children attending school from home with digital aids. Many people now working from home. Setting up remote home offices. Bylaw officers checking stores enforcing the rules. It is frightening to see how the world has changed over a year. I have seen it changed all through the windows of my home.

The Seasons of Change happening through the windowpanes of my home.



Lyrics to be Sung at the Toppling of Tyrants' Statues

By Joshua Weresch, Central Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., Anishinaabeg land

I grew up in the Spirit:
Pentecost was every day.
She gave us our own stories
To walk in Jesus' Way.

My wife grew up United:
Love watered many a just seed:

"From each, by their ability,
To each, in their own need."

Now we have four children,
Presbyterian, for now,
Though name is unimportant:
Jesus' love is Why and How.

We grew up under statues,
As you, in shadow of them all,
And only learned as we grew older
How so many sought their fall.
The first statue named Enchantment
Fell, as church leaders fell
Into beds with others' wives.
You know such stories well.

The second named Intelligent
Tumbled: taught in home or school,
Asking questions of the Bible
Was to be an apparent fool.

Thus, three fell in the shredded
Bible,
For many manuscripts abound
And each witness to a Jesus
Who loved, died, and lives, unwritten
down.

Leaned on and under,
They felt right, smelled just and true,
Yet as they've other sides and lights,
They were destroyed. Thus, honest
stories do.

We now confront these statues,
Some deeds poised in metal, stone,
But there's no history in emblems,
For it's in stories, blood and bones.

What are statues: more than a
window,
Aquinas's "instant that abides,"
The past yanked toward a future,
In which only force decides?

MacDonald hangs Louis Riel,
Dewdney's rations: tools of war,
Sarge Kenneth Deane kills Dudley
George:
Still stolen land: that's what it's for.

The statues threw their shadows
From their then onto this now,
But they were just their shadows,
Not the bodies breaking down.

When you see what once were
statues,
As you pull them to the ground,
Think on the space you've now
created,
Possible sunlights streaming down.

Think of the metals to re-purpose,
On the spears beat into 'shares,
Or the stones to build the houses,
Always the poor's, from rich folks' lairs.

Think on all clay-footed tyrants,
Sons of David, ground to dust,
For if something's made from
nothing,
There's, first, some nothing: so God
must.

If there's something worth re-
building,
May it be storied breaths and words,
Though may our tears not be the
mortar
Yet built upon the hearts so stirred.

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The Presbyterian Church in Canada

PULPIT VACANCIES

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Calgary, Varsity Acres (full-time minister) – Alberta & the Northwest
Fredericton, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Atlantic Provinces
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Prince George, St. Giles (full-time minister) – British Columbia
Vancouver, Kerrisdale (full-time minister) – British Columbia
Barrie, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda
Elmvale, Elmvale Presbyterian and Knox Flos (full-time minister, 2-point charge) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda
Kitchener, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda
Lakefield, St. Andrew's and Lakehurst, Knox (60%-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda
Orillia, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda
Peterborough, St. Paul's (70%-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda
Toronto, University (part-time minister) – Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda
Arnprior, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Deep River, Deep River Community (full-time minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario
Montreal, Taiwanese Robert Campbell (full-time minister) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario
Montreal, The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul (full-time Associate Minister for Community Connections and Care) – Quebec & Eastern Ontario
Kenora, First (full-time minister) – Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario
Winnipeg, Westwood (full-time minister) – Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario
Dundas, West Flamboro (80%-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario
Durham, Durham Presbyterian (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario
Fonthill, Kirk on the Hill (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario
Niagara Falls, Chippawa (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario
North Yarmouth, St. James (part-time or student minister) – Southwestern Ontario
Point Edward, Point Edward Presbyterian (half-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario
St. Catharines, Knox (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario
Thorold, St. Andrew's (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario
Woodstock, Knox (full-time minister) – Southwestern Ontario

DEATH NOTICES

Read all full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

The Rev. Dr. Helen Goggin
Oakville, Ont.
Deceased February 12, 2021

Marie Betty Nicholson
Durham, Ont.
Deceased January 27, 2021

Florence Metzger
Vancouver, B.C.
Deceased January 26, 2021

The Rev. John Burkhart
Amherstburg, Ont.
Deceased January 24, 2021

Dorothyann Summers
Barrie, Ont.
Deceased January 20, 2021

Evelyn Bailey
Simcoe, Ont.
Deceased January 16, 2021

The Rev. Kenneth Knight
Hensall, Ont.
Deceased January 15, 2021

The Rev. Eric Alexander Beggs
Richmond Hill, Ont.
Deceased January 11, 2021

The Rev. Norman Grant
Orillia, Ont.
Deceased January 1, 2021

Robert Baron
London, Ont.
Deceased December 25, 2020

Dorothy Wilson
Niagara Falls, Ont.
Deceased December 22, 2020

The Rev. John Fortier
Port Howe, N.S.
Deceased December 5, 2020

The Rev. Connie Lee
Edmonton, Alta.
Deceased November 29, 2020

The Rev. Jean Armstrong
Richmond Hill, Ont.
Deceased November 28, 2020

The Rev. William G. MacDonald
Fonthill, Ont.
Deceased November 20, 2020

Jessie Margaret Horne
London, Ont.
Deceased November 18, 2020

Marjorie Douglas
Toronto, Ont.
Deceased November 7, 2020

William Steward
Langley, B.C.
Deceased October 13, 2020

Joy Margaret Ross Randall
Cobourg, Ont.
Deceased July 10, 2020

JUST WONDERING...



Submit your questions to connection@presbyterian.ca

In view of the pandemic, we are conducting our services online. Our minister told us that because of copyright rules, we can no longer post hymns on slides on Zoom. Are the copyright laws so strict that we cannot put hymns on Zoom? Have churches been prosecuted for breach of copyright in situations like this?

It is correct that in order to use copyrighted music in online worship services, an active streaming license is required to digitally transmit copyrighted music from a streaming platform, such as Zoom, even if the services are not recorded or shared online afterwards. An article on Music Copyright in Online Worship Services is available on the PCC website at presbyterian.ca/music-copyright, which may be helpful to refer to.

Regarding hymns in the 1997 version of the Book of Praise, it is permissible to post/share hymns online that are in the public domain. A list of Book of Praise hymns in the public domain are found at presbyterian.ca/worship.

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

How are elders elected during a pandemic?

Electing elders is one of the most important functions of Presbyterian congregations. At every level of the church, from Session to General Assembly, we call upon elders to provide prayerful, wise, creative, faithful leadership. In the words of *Living Faith*, "The Lord continues his ministry in and through the church... Through the church, God orders this ministry by calling some to special tasks in the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ... Through the

office of ruling elder, men and women are ordained to share with the minister in the leadership, pastoral care, and oversight of the congregation" (*Living Faith* 7.2). We thank God for qualified individuals who are willing to accept this servant-leadership role.

The need to elect new elders has not diminished during the COVID-19 pandemic. Electing them, however, has become a little more difficult due to physical separation and subsequent communication barriers. Some congregations have found they are able to communicate effectively with their members by way of a teleconference platform such as Zoom. Others rely more on telephone calls, social media, email, Canada Post and the like to keep their members informed and to receive ideas and concerns. Whichever way you reach out to your congregation, it is hoped the following steps will help Sessions select new elders. See Book of Forms 132–133 for election legislation. The Book of Forms can be read and downloaded at presbyterian.ca/gao.

1. The Session decides which election method best suits the needs of their congregation: Ballot of Nominees (Book of Forms 132.2.1) or Ballot of Members (Book of Forms 132.2.2). Depending on the method chosen, the Session will contact the congregation and either call for nominations that will result in a ballot of nominees or it will circulate a ballot of members with the usual instructions.
2. The Session asks for ballots to be returned to [person or location] by [date]. To maintain voting confidentiality, marked ballots could be folded inside a signed and sealed envelope that clearly indicates who has voted so that the Session can know only members have voted and that no one has accidentally

voted more than once.

3. The ballots could be counted by elders using a video conference call or by meeting at a place where safe physical distancing is possible, subject to local pandemic instruction. One elder could open the ballots in the presence of at least one other elder and the results are tallied.
4. If a ballot of nominees is used, the Session will determine the candidates who have been elected based on the strength of congregational support demonstrated by the number of votes each one receives and the number of additional elders required (See Book of Forms 132.7). If the ballot of members is used, the Session will determine which candidates to approach about their willingness to serve based on their suitability for the eldership, the number of votes each one receives and the number of additional elders required (See Book of Forms 132.8.).
5. Elected elders who are already ordained, could be permitted by the Session to participate fully in Session responsibilities, including voting at meetings, right away. Elders elected who have not yet been ordained, could be permitted by the Session to participate in the work of the Session without a vote until they can be ordained at a public service of worship.
6. When public worship can be held again, Book of Forms Appendix A-11 Edict for the ordination/admission of elders, could be read to the congregation to provide sufficient notice. On the announced Sunday, elders not yet ordained would be ordained, and all the newly elected elders are officially admitted to the office of elder.

Answered by the Clerks of Assembly



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CROSSWORD

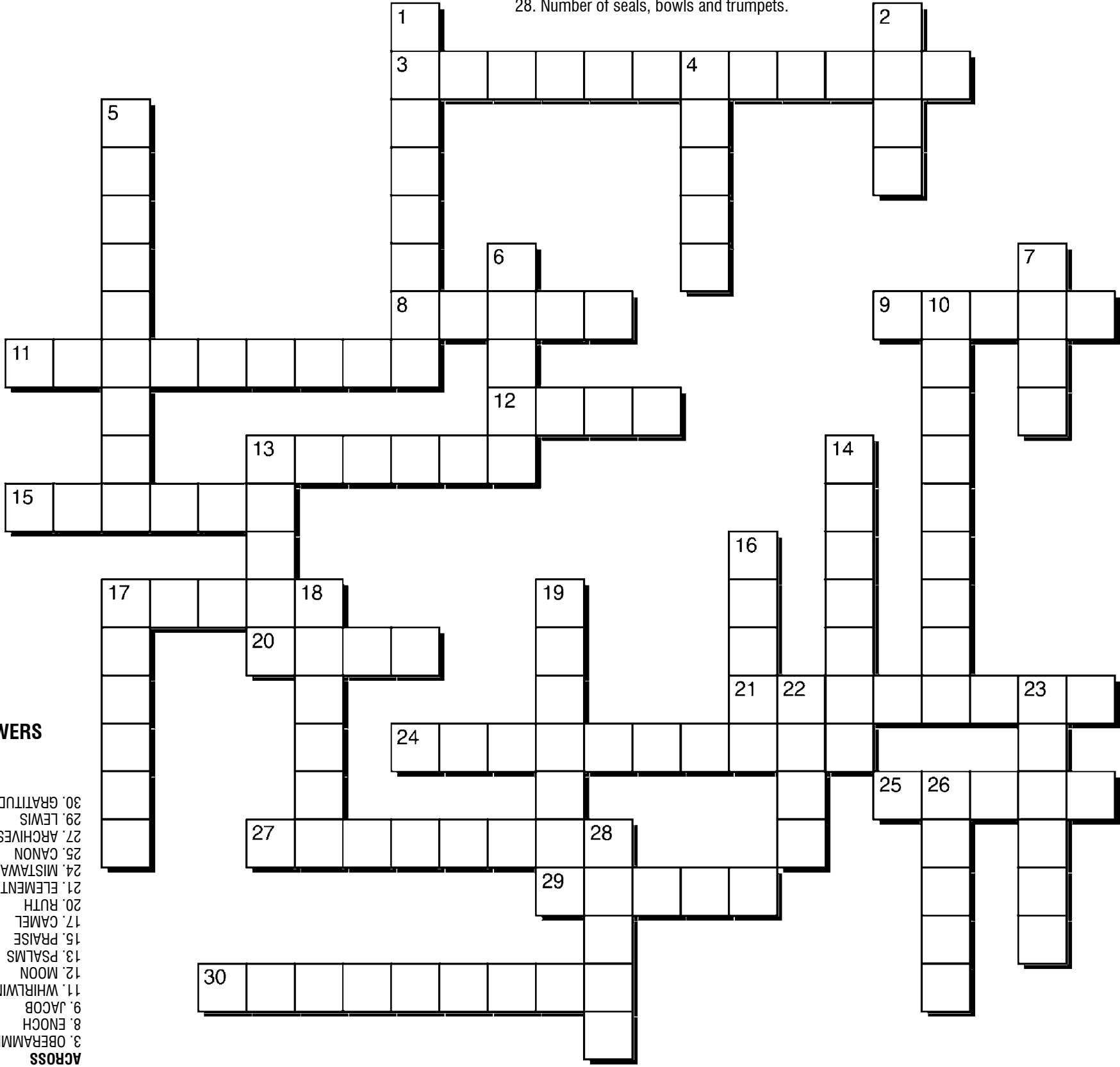
Test your knowledge of the Bible, the PCC and more with this edition's latest crossword puzzle.

ACROSS

- 3. Bavarian passion play site.
- 8. Noah's great-grandfather, the first prophet in the Bible.
- 9. Joseph's coat of many colours that sparked jealousy in his brothers was given to him by ____.
- 11. Elijah's elevator.
- 12. The date of Easter is based on the phases of the ____.
- 13. The "hymnbook" of the Bible.
- 15. The offering of grateful worship in words or song.
- 17. "It is easier for a ____ to go through the eye of a needle..."
- 20. This non-Jewish Moabite woman was an ancestor of Jesus.
- 21. Periodic table, or communion bread and wine.
- 24. The only Presbyterian church located on an Indigenous reserve in Canada.
- 25. Authoritative list of scripture.
- 27. Where important records are lodged.
- 29. Jerry or C.S.
- 30. Thankfulness.

DOWN

- 1. The mother of Moses, Aaron and Miriam.
- 2. Traditionally, the ashes used on Ash Wednesday are made from the previous year's ____ branches.
- 4. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel are called the ____ prophets.
- 5. The name of the woman who was an early church leader along with her husband, Aquila.
- 6. The Book of ____ contains the polity of the PCC.
- 7. Most frequently mentioned animal in the Bible.
- 10. Saint who wrote *Confessions* and *The City of God*.
- 13. This disciple, armed with a sword, cut off a servant's ear during the arrest of Jesus.
- 14. Units of time or official meeting record.
- 16. King ____ Version of the Bible.
- 17. Author of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
- 18. He posted the 95 theses.
- 19. Snack food often said to have been made originally during the Lenten season to look like arms crossed in prayer.
- 22. Common Easter flower.
- 23. Jesus' first crown was made of this.
- 26. Son of Amram and Jochebed.
- 28. Number of seals, bowls and trumpets.



CROSSWORD ANSWERS

- ACROSS
- 1. JOCHEBED
 - 2. PALM
 - 3. OBERAMMERGAU
 - 4. MAJOR
 - 5. PRISCILLA
 - 6. FORMS
 - 7. DOVE
 - 8. ENOCH
 - 9. JACOB
 - 10. AUGUSTINE
 - 11. MINUTES
 - 12. MOON
 - 13. PSALMS
 - 14. CALVIN
 - 15. PRAISE
 - 16. JAMES
 - 17. CAMEL
 - 18. LUTHER
 - 19. PRETZEL
 - 20. RUTH
 - 21. ELEMENTS
 - 22. LILY
 - 23. THORNS
 - 24. MISTAWASIS
 - 25. CANON
 - 26. AARON
 - 27. ARCHIVES
 - 28. SEVEN
 - 29. LEWIS
 - 30. GRATITUDE
- DOWN