



PRESBYTERIAN Connection

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Malawi: Rejoicing in the Lord Always



The Rev. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Moderator, with the Vice-President of Malawi, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and representatives from other churches.



Pat at a Malawi prison opening a new kitchen supported by the PCC and standing with prison staff.

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

It was easy to feel welcome when our little group reached Malawi for the moderator's trip at the end of August—the people were friendly, and everywhere we went, we were warmly, even effusively, greeted in a formal manner. Our group included my husband Tim and I, supported ably by the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald and Grace McCreary from the PCC national office. We were privileged to have the Rev. Hastings Phale as our guide and driver; he is a minister in the Presbyterian Church in Malawi who is an evangelist, the founder of the prison ministry, and he is the local pastor. His help was invaluable in introducing us to the projects and people we met and getting us over some pothole-filled roads to the sites we visited. People, agencies and

organizations seemed genuinely delighted that we, as The Presbyterian Church in Canada, were visiting, and often thanked us for the support the PCC has shown over the 55 years we have been partners in Malawi.

An immediate impression of Malawi is that it is a very poor country—the majority of the people live in poverty; only in the big cities do you see any indications of middle- and upper-class amenities. There are moments of beauty, of course: tea fields on a mountainside, Lake Malawi, beautiful tropical flowers. However, poverty is evident in the many people selling a few essential goods at roadside markets, under sheds and lean-tos that have thatched roofs, in areas teeming with people. People use these modest markets to supplement what they can grow through subsistence agriculture.

Poverty is also seen in the

houses; they are almost always made of locally produced brick and are very simple, with few amenities and usually no electricity or running water. While brick is a sturdy building material, we saw many structures abandoned or run-down in the roadside villages.

Continued on page 2



Pat in the pulpit at St. Michael's and All Angels Presbyterian Church in Blantyre Synod, Malawi.

Page 8...
Learning from
the Past

Page 18...
Presbyterian
Gatherings

Page 36...
"I Love Taiwan"
Experience



Pat and the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald with synod leaders from Blantyre Synod.

“...I brought official greetings from the PCC.”

Continued from page 1

Where hand pumps for drawing well water have been installed, there is a big improvement in health and accessibility, compared to using polluted local streams as a water source.

The immediate reason for our visit was to attend the 100th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Malawi. Founded by Scottish missionaries, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian is the largest denomination in Malawi. The centenary was a weekend-long affair, starting Friday evening with a book launch attended by hundreds of church folks for a book about the church's history. At that event, I preached a short sermon on the centenary theme from Psalm 126,

“The Lord has done great things for us.” The celebration continued Saturday with a service at the General Assembly office, then a march to a local soccer stadium for a church-based celebration, at which I brought official greetings from the PCC.

Then, on Sunday, we celebrated again at the stadium in a several-hour event attended by thousands, including the President of Malawi. For this, I offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the Presbyterian Church in Malawi. I have to say, that's the first time I've prayed for several thousand people! Both stadium celebrations were filled with music, choirs and dancing—very joyous affairs!

Let me mention just a few

of the projects and ministries we visited, highlighting ones to which The Presbyterian Church in Canada has contributed. Given my background, spending a day at Zomba Theological University was delightful. Students from all over Malawi overcome many obstacles like economic hardship and being separated from their families to attend the seminary. We joined a morning worship service at which I spoke to encourage the students in their studies. We also visited a dorm for women and saw the renovation of a building that will become the Graduate Student Center. International Ministries of the Life and Mission Agency provides regular grants to the school, as well as support for women students. And a Canadian minister, the Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand, has been appointed to assist with the development of curricula, enhancing the library and encouraging research and academic exchanges.

Another important organization supported by the PCC through Presbyterian World Service & Development is the Mulanje Mission Hospital. This institution is part of the Mulanje mission that serves over 100,000 people, encompassing a large congregation, nursing school, hospital and elementary school. The PCC supports the work of the hospital in providing maternal and child health services—a critical outreach that works toward sexual and reproductive health and infection prevention, promotes community clinic days for immunization, and provides support to community groups such as village



Pat with Melton Luhanga, Executive Director of Churches Action in Relief and Development.

safe motherhood committees and village health committees. With PCC funding, the hospital also supports 300 children, who have been orphaned or are vulnerable due to HIV and AIDS, with health and education assistance (including the payment of school fees to allow the children to attend school), as well as livelihoods support for their guardians.

The third and final project I want to describe is the prison ministry called Friends of Prison. Hastings, the guide for our trip, initiated this mission a few years ago in his role as an evangelist. The prison ministry now has five pastors serving 23 prisons across the southern part of the country and is supported by the PCC's International Ministries. The prisons in Malawi are incredibly difficult places—poorly maintained, crowded, impoverished, providing only the most basic food and supplies. The prison visitors share the good news of God's love and forgiveness through Bible study, worship, personal counselling, and distributions of medicines, soap, sleeping mats, clothes and Bibles. We saw this ministry at work in both a men's and women's prison; at both prisons, I was invited to give a short sermon of encouragement to the prisoners.

At the women's prison, we viewed a new kitchen provided for the prisoners—the women have to cook their own food—built with funds from the PCC. I blessed the new kitchen and then formally handed it over to the prison staff

for the use of the inmates. The guard staff seemed very happy to be able to provide the new kitchen space for the prisoners.

One quality that ties all these church missions together—and the many more supported by the PCC—is the commitment by the church and its partners to help the lives of the least privileged and most vulnerable: struggling students, women and young children, orphans, and prisoners. Other programs target support for subsistence farmers and village agriculture, youth at risk of teenage pregnancies and lack of education and skills, and people living with HIV and malaria. You might think that confronting that much suffering every day would weigh down the spirit of the church, but the churches in Malawi are congregations full of liveliness, scripture, music, dancing and rejoicing. The church where I preached an early Sunday worship—a 6 a.m. service!—had six choirs singing during the two-hours. And no one stands still when they're singing.

It's like they have taken to heart the admonition from Philippians 4:4 to rejoice in the Lord always. They read, preach and teach the Word of God. They live the compassionate mission of the gospel in a country filled with hardship and suffering—and through all of it, they have a song to be shared and joy in their hearts. We do well not only to partner with them in Christ's mission but also to learn from them to rejoice in the Lord always.



Pat talking with the women faculty who teach in the women's program at Zomba Theological University.

Why We Worship the Way We Do: Baptism

By the Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset,
Calvin Presbyterian Church
in Toronto, Ont.

The Bible articulates the theology of our faith in stories. Christ's teaching about the reign of God was more narrative than it was didactic or systematic. This story of a baptism in one church articulates a theology of baptism by describing baptismal preparation, profession of faith, preparing to take vows and celebrations of baptism.

By the power of the Holy Spirit God acts through Baptism. It is the sacrament not of what we do but of what God has done for us in Christ. (*Living Faith* 7.6.3)

Samantha is about to be baptized. She is seven, almost eight years old, and is a bright spark in our congregation. She sings in the children's choir with exuberance. She participates in the Children's Worship Centre. I met with her and her mother on a Thursday evening. I ask Sam if she knows what will happen on Sunday morning. She says, "I am going to have my bati...zim!" It is a hard word to say...and to understand. We get water from the kitchen. I ask Sam if she wants it warm or cold and she says, "Very cold! Cold water is very good for you." We go into the dark sanctuary and she helps to turn on all the lights. Then we move the heavy Baptismal Font out toward the centre of the chancel and open it up. *Font* is a funny word, too. We placed the baptism bowl on top—a crystal bowl in the shape of a boat. There are three shells in it. Sam picks one up to see if she can hear the ocean inside. We stay very still and quiet so she can listen. She hears it!

As we sit in the front pew, Sam's mom and I discuss the questions I will ask her about her own faith. Sam says she remembers a story from the Worship Centre about sharing the light of Jesus and she thinks it might have been about baptism. I tell her she is right! I gently touch the top of her head

and tell her that I am going to put water on her head three times on Sunday morning: in the name of the Father/Creator, the Son/Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We talk about how the Holy Spirit is with us, even inside us—to comfort and calm us (Comforter), to stand up for us when we are facing difficult things, like bullies (Advocate), and to teach us everything we need to know (John 14 and 16).

This baptism will mark her as a beloved child of God—part of Christ's family forever. I tell her that even though she won't be able to see it, God will always be able to see it. It is a seal that can never be washed off or fade away. I tell her that her mom has one of those seals on her forehead—and I do, too.

It is time to pour the water into the font. I ask Samantha if she wants to pour it. She is eager, but too short to reach the font, so we pull a chair over. She wants to listen into the shell again, so we stand quietly in the hushed sanctuary space until she hears the ocean, a grin spreading over her face. When she is ready, she lifts the pitcher of water. It is a bit heavy. I tell her it doesn't matter if the water jumps out of the bowl and things get a little wet. Baptism is a little messy. Once she pours the cold water in, she scoops it up with her hands and splashes it on her face and laughs. She plays in the water as we talk about all the things we need water for—life, our bodies, to drink, wash in, cook with. We talk about how the water in Baptism does not change magically into anything else. It is just plain, ordinary water that God chooses to use in a special way. The water gets a bit dirty and clouded as she washes her hands in it over and over again.

We talk about the congregation and how they will make a promise to her at her baptism. I ask her how the people at church already care for her. She is not sure. Her mom says, "Sam, what do Joanne and Connie always have for you when you sit with



Two of our confirmands join the celebration of Samantha's baptism with a special cake at coffee hour.

them at church?" "Candy!!" Sam cries with a smile. "Right, they do that because they love you and care for you." We talk about the storytellers, who teach her God's stories in the Worship Centre, and the Children's Arts Club where she learns to sing songs to share in church and makes friends with the other children.

"Usually when I baptize a little baby," I say, "I carry the baby down the aisle after the baptism so everyone can meet her as the newest child baptized into God's family. But I can't carry you, Sam." Knowing how much she loves to dance, I suggest that maybe if I give her a lovely, colourful ribbon, she could dance down the centre aisle while I welcome her and introduce her. She eagerly agrees and starts to dance down the centre and up the side aisle. It was a spontaneous decision on my part, but perhaps, one of the best liturgical decisions I have ever made!

By the time we are done, the four teenagers from the confirmation class have arrived. Some parents are staying, too, and my colleague from the United Church is there (we share in Ecumenical Shared Ministry), finishing up the preparations for a dinner. Ten of us sit down at the long board table to feast on homemade macaroni and cheese and salad as we share the news of our day.

After dinner, we join in a circle of chairs to hear the story about the light from the Children's Worship Centre that Sam remembered, as I begin lighting a candle for each person present.

"Once there was someone who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things that people began to follow him. But they didn't know who he was. So, one day they simply had to ask him. And he said, 'I am the Light.' Many have come to the Light to receive their light. But the Light is not smaller. It is still the same. I wonder how so much light could be given away and the Light still be the same. Now the day that you received your light may have been a day when you were very tiny. Or it may be a day when you are seven and almost eight. Or it may be a day when you are a teenager. Whenever that day happens, something is done in the church called baptism."

Continued on page 4

CORRECTION NOTICE

In the Summer 2024 edition, page 14, the "Changes in Collingwood" article incorrectly listed where the Rev. Tim Raeburn-Gibson relocated to after serving at First Presbyterian Church in Collingwood. He is now at Westmount Presbyterian Church (not Westminster) in London, Ont. Our apologies for the error.

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Moderator of the General Assembly:

The Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls

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



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

A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace

Continued from page 3

We talk about how many sacraments we have in the Presbyterian (and United) church—only two. One of the parents, who is from the Roman Catholic tradition, is surprised, since Catholics have seven. I explain that we only have two because Baptism and Communion are the only two things out of the seven that Jesus specifically asked his disciples to do for each other.

The confirmation class continues our tradition of seeing how quickly they can find Bible verses, and their parents join in. We look up Luke 11:19-20: “Do this in remembrance of me”; and Matthew 28:16-20: “Go therefore and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

We talk about what a sacrament is. A sacrament is a visible sign of an invisible grace. It makes God’s love tangible in ways we can feel, see and taste. We look up Psalm 34:8: “Taste and see that God is good.” A sacrament is a sign of the continuing covenant between God and us. It starts with Noah and then Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 9:12–23 and 15:5–6). It is renewed in the Exodus (Exodus 6: 2,7). It continues with Jeremiah and the prophets (Jeremiah 31: 31–34). Jesus says it makes

the covenant new in his own body and blood. We talk about how a sacrament reminds us that we are part of the family of God—cleansed of our sin, claimed in baptism and fed at the table.

I tell the group that baptism is like the light. Light looks colourless in its brightness. But when it shines through a prism (water droplets make fantastic tiny prisms), you can see that hidden inside the light is the full rainbow spectrum of colour. It doesn’t appear magically. Rather, it has been there in the light all along, hidden in plain view. Faith is like the prism that allows us to see the love of God in all its splendour in the water of baptism. And though the water dries, the beauty of the prism colours remain—visible to God and those who have faith to know it is there.

I tell Sam and the confirmation kids that in my house, we celebrate my daughter Rachel’s Baptism Day every year almost like another birthday. On that day, we take out the baptism box. I hand Rachel her baptism box and ask her to show us some of the things that are in it. She pulls out her infant baptism dress that her Nana made, some pictures, a shell and some books. She explains how we light her baptismal candle,

and goes through all the things in her box (which she adds to each year). We have a different theme each time that represents something your baptism gives you: courage, generosity, confidence, gratitude, peace. She explains that there is a small gift in the bottom of the box each year. Rachel says, “When I was little, I was annoyed that Mom and Dad made me go through all this stuff in here first before I could have the gift. But now I really like going through all these things every year.”

I have a Baptism Box prepared for each kid. I ask them to write their name and the date of their baptism on their box (I had collected the dates from their parents before). I let them pick out a couple of shells from a beautiful collection given to me from one of the older members of the congregation, who gathered these shells with her husband from all over Canada and Scotland. They put those in their boxes. When they open their boxes, they find a small gift. It is a prism to hang in their windows. Samantha’s is solar powered, so it spins to pick up the light. I go to the kitchen and bring out fancy cupcakes and tell them that the day we celebrate our baptisms is a day for celebration and special treats. We put on



A baptism at Family Church of Heritage Green in Stoney Creek, Ont., by the Rev. Alex Douglas.

some fun music and eat our cupcakes together.

When Sunday morning comes, the youth choir sings, “I went down to the river to pray... Good Lord, show me the way.” We read the words of Scripture: “This promise is for you, and for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God has called” (Acts 2:39). We celebrate the God who loves us first, before we can even understand or profess our faith. We invite everyone present to remember their own baptism.

Sam’s parents profess their faith, the congregation vows to encourage, pray and care for Sam. We stand to say the Apostles’ Creed together. We offer a prayer of thanksgiving over the water. The water is good and cold, and as I baptize Sam, a few drops land on her stuffed puppy that she brought to help her feel less nervous. I guess that means maybe Mini-Max is baptized, too. I pull a long colourful ribbon from the pocket of my gown. As Sam dances down the centre aisle, I say, “Samantha has been received into the one holy catholic and apostolic church through baptism. God has made her a member of the family of God. God loves this child, and this child now belongs to God through Christ and is a member of Christ’s church. From this day forward there will always be a place for Samantha in this family, regardless of this child’s state or condition. Remember the vows that you have made this day. Love this child. Laugh with this child in joy, comfort this child in sorrow, and stand by this child in faith.”

Sam returns to the front of the church, a little out of breath, and with a smile as bright as the sunlight.



Images from the PCC’s continuation of Christ’s ministry over the last 150 years will be featured in the 2025 calendar, worship bulletins, social media and newspaper. The image here shows family and friends gathered for the baptism of Princes Margriet of the Netherlands at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Ottawa in June 1943. Dutch royal family took refuge in Canada during World War II. A clip of the baptism can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/232jp6ww>. PHOTO CREDIT: THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ARCHIVES.

What The Presbyterian Church in Canada affirms about baptism:

Baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ and with his church. Through it we share in the death and resurrection of Christ and are commissioned to his service.

In Baptism, water is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The water signifies the washing away of sin, the start of new life in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

By the power of the Holy Spirit God acts through Baptism.

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

Baptism is also an act of discipleship that requires commitment and looks towards growth in Christ. Those baptized in infancy are called in later years to make personal profession of Christ. What is born may die. What is grafted may wither. Congregations and those baptized must strive to nurture life in Christ.

Baptism assures us that we belong to God. In life and in death our greatest comfort is that we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.

(Living Faith, 7.6)

Buildings and Property

By the Life and Mission Agency

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is seconding some of the time of Ainsley Chapman, executive director of Evangel Hall Mission (EHM), to devote to congregations as they consider the future use of their land and buildings. In some cases, this work may be part of a larger vision to help address the housing crisis in Canada.

Recognizing the challenges housing insecurity brings to the health and soundness of communities, Presbyterians have long been concerned with providing residences for vulnerable populations. Since the 1960s, some churches have incorporated affordable housing into their ministry. Recent congregational

projects have included building carbon-neutral accommodations to serve immigrants and refugees and housing for seniors.

Evangel Hall is a mission of the Presbytery of East Toronto and has served the downtown homeless population since 1913, providing food, shelter, spiritual care and permanent housing for over 170 tenants across two apartment buildings.

A recognized and award-winning housing leader within the Toronto area, Ainsley will share the expertise and experience learned from EHM's extensive work with the social housing community and the government, which will help congregations navigate development processes across Canada. Ainsley will be working



closely with Karen Plater, Associate Secretary for Stewardship of the PCC, in doing this work and is committed to providing tools, financial resources and staff to move this mission forward.

Presbyterians take seriously the stewardship of the land and buildings we are blessed with so that they can serve God's mission. Together, the national office and EHM look forward to working with congregations and presbyteries as they ask how their properties can best serve communities in the future.

Some of the questions congregations and presbyteries have been asking already include:

- How could a development help our congregation participate in God's mission?
- What would be the responsibilities and scope of work for volunteers?
- What kind of expertise might we need?
- How could our building/property help the housing crisis in our community?
- How else could our building serve the community?
- Who in our community should we be talking to? When should we be talking to them?
- How could a feasibility study help? Who conducts them?

- What questions do we need to ask developers? Lawyers? Government?
- How is all this work—from feasibility studies to completion—funded?
- We are running out of time, money and/or volunteers. Is it too late to consider a project?
- A developer told us we needed to decide quickly. Can we set our own timeline for deciding?

We recognize that this is a cutting-edge ministry. There is no cookie-cutter or "one size fits all" solution to building use or affordable housing. The PCC and EHM are committed to working alongside congregations and presbyteries who would like to explore the options available, so that lessons can be shared and best practices created as we navigate this critical work together.

For more information, visit presbyterian.ca/building-resources or contact Karen Plater at kplater@presbyterian.ca, or Ainsley Chapman at achapman@presbyterian.ca.

National Housing Day: Housing is a Human Right

By Ainsley Chapman, Executive Director, Evangel Hall Mission in Toronto, Ont.

Canada's annual National Housing Day took place on November 22. It was a day to raise awareness of the need for safe, affordable housing for all Canadians. Throughout the month, events took place across Canada where communities of faith, housing providers, service agencies and others spoke about the housing

crisis that is affecting communities coast to coast.

National Housing Day goes back to 1998, when advocates called on governments to declare homelessness "a national disaster requiring emergency humanitarian relief"—a call that led the federal government to take action. By 2000, Canada had made this an official event, and we have been using this day to celebrate our housing accomplishments, and not lose momentum. And things



did get better. Sadly, the crisis we are facing in 2024 is, once again, nearing disaster. Seniors and young families with children have become some of the most at-risk groups for housing loss and are filling shelters at alarming rates.

We have the opportunity to be bold. To be visionary. To be community leaders. It was communities of faith that built emergency shelters, housing for people with disabilities, and created long-term care facilities. Communities

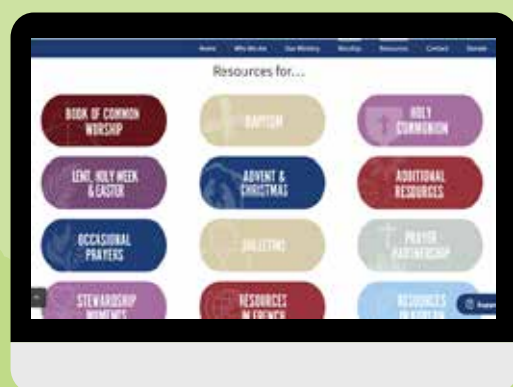
of faith established the Out of the Cold program and built much of the affordable housing still being used today. And, as social housing agencies evolve, names change and they secularize, and they no longer feel recognizable, it is important to remember that almost every one of them started as an idea in a church basement, and that congregations brought those ideas to life.

As we did in November, let's make housing part of our agenda. Let's talk about what Presbyterians have done over the last hundred years to create shelters and homes for those in need. Let's remember and honour our history and thank the previous generations and our younger selves for

being bold and visionary. Faith communities across the country are holding special prayer services, fundraisers and discussion groups. Book clubs are reading memoirs by people who have lived on the street. Individuals are writing letters to their elected officials. Libraries are hosting authors who are experts on housing insecurity.

This National Housing Day, the board of Evangel Hall Mission honoured the visionaries who first opened its doors in 1913, built housing in the 1990s, and built even more in the 2000s by declaring "Housing is a human right"—one of EHM's new values. All Canadians deserve to live life in safety and with dignity, and housing is where this starts.

Founded in 1913, **Evangel Hall Mission (EHM)** is a multi-service agency that provides support to people who are homeless and living in poverty. The mission offers hot meals, showers, laundry facilities and respite from the elements through its Drop-In Centre. It is a mission of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in downtown Toronto that provides housing for 170 people, most of whom are seniors. Learn more at evangelhall.ca.



RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP

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presbyterian.ca/worship

Daily prayers, weekly lectionary resources, images for worship, liturgies and so much more!



Place of Hope Indigenous Presbyterian Church



By the Rev. Margaret Mullin

Place of Hope Indigenous Presbyterian Church is an Indigenous congregation that offers hope and healing to Indigenous people dealing with multi-generational trauma and abject poverty.

What is our purpose as an Indigenous community of Presbyterian followers of Jesus, and what

does it mean to be governed by Indigenous values?

One of those values is that, generally, we do not have a hierarchy in Indigenous communities. Prior to European contact, Indigenous people did things by consensus, and we did things in community to help the community. Our church family is an Indigenous community with a ministry team chosen by the people to lead it.

Our ministry leadership team consists of four Ruling Elders and one Teaching Elder. This reflects the common Presbyterian congregation leadership structure within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The five leaders are all ordained to their offices and are called the "Session." They are chosen and called by the people according to the procedures found

in the Presbyterian Book of Forms. Beyond that, we strive to find a more Indigenous way of operating and decision-making, as an Indigenous, faith-based community.

As with Presbyterian congregations, there is no hierarchy in the Session. Each Session member has a significant role on the team and is equal in authority within the team. Session members look to each other and to the people to decide the ministry focus and services that the congregation will provide within its community. This includes the minister.

Ours is a Healing and Reconciliation ministry. First, participants need to know the truth of the history of colonization in Canada and the detrimental effects it has had on generations of Indigenous people. The patterns of dysfunction and lateral violence need to be linked to the residential school system that our national church took part in operating.

Then, the conversation needs to be opened in the Indigenous community and non-Indigenous church communities, followed by a process of lament and healing on each side. Only then do we feel that reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people will be possible. The process will be messy, and mistakes will be made, but the process of truth-telling and healing from a traumatic past is the only option for our congregation and the church if we wish to take part in the reconciling ministry of Christ.

Leadership roles at Place of Hope

Matriarchal roles: These roles are filled by Indigenous Grandmothers. Two Indigenous Matriarchs stay in touch with each other and with all the member households. They watch over the children, in particular, and they pray, encourage, mentor and teach individuals and families how to survive hardships, how to become resourceful people, how to navigate the various social systems, how to confront systemic racism, how to be resilient against all odds, relying on the work of the Holy Spirit, the power of Jesus, and the hope of the Kingdom of God, which has already arrived and is not yet complete.

The Matriarchs never let us forget our purpose. How do we develop healthy relationships with Creator/God, self and others? How

do we make our world better for our children and all the children who will be born over the next seven generations? How do we grow our children to be proud of being Indigenous and committed to preserving nature and the land that Creator gave us the responsibility for? How do we ensure our children grow spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and socially to succeed in a colonial society?

One of the Matriarchs is the Youth leader, the other coordinates the Sunday fellowship time. Both mentor younger women, stay connected with all congregation members and adherents, and make referrals to the minister, the Indigenous lay minister, the Parish Social Worker, and the volunteer nurse, as needed.

The Parish Social Worker role:

With multiple systems failing our people, combined with discrimination, deep enduring poverty and all the social ills that it begets, we have discovered that to serve our people well, we need a professional social worker registered in the Province of Manitoba to provide individual, family, couple and age-appropriate child and youth counselling.

This professional also advocates for our members within all social systems—health, education, justice, child welfare, employment and income assistance. The PSW teaches and mentors the entire leadership team in trauma-based and age-appropriate approaches to care.

The registered social worker currently in this role is certified in early childhood education and, therefore, serves as Child and Youth Christian education superintendent for children and youth aged 0 to 19. They also run a Dream Big Literacy Project that extends into adulthood.

The Indigenous lay minister role:

This person is Indigenous and fluent in at least one of the three Indigenous languages common in the congregation. The person in this role assists with grief counselling, officiating at wakes, and organizing funeral services for congregation members. They are often called upon to officiate the viewing services in Winnipeg for extended family members from several Northern Manitoba reserves, which is home to our



One of our Matriarchs and an ordained Presbyterian ruling elder, Lorna Meaniss and her granddaughter Niamh "NJ" Shingoose-Meaniss. Four generations of Lorna's family currently worship at Place of Hope.

congregation members and their extended families. This person takes on the role of hospital and home visits for people during end-of-life care and leads worship services when the minister is on holiday or medical leave. They also provide music for the Sunday services, wakes and funerals.

The minister's role: The minister moderates the team meetings, provides information and the correct protocols for consensus decision-making, conducts worship on Sundays, officiates at the sacraments of Baptism and Communion, preaches and teaches about living effectively using the Christian gospel and Indigenous Spiritual teachings. This person also provides pastoral counselling and prayer to those who are facing difficult circumstances. Adult Christian Education is incorporated into worship and becomes an intentional part of each opportunity the minister has with people in pastoral care and program roles.

The minister encourages the participation of all the members in the services and programs offered by the congregation. Knowing the participant, developing relationships and watching when the community is gathered makes matching gifts and skills to the service needed easier.

The minister also coordinates the provision of services that have been set up by the Session. The minister provides the necessary administration duties and searches for funding to sustain a congregation and its programs. Given that members often live in poverty, funding is a constant concern. We rely on charitable one-time and monthly donations, bequests and grants.

To learn more about Place of Hope Indigenous Presbyterian Church or to donate to this work, visit pccweb.ca/placeofhope.



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The Committee on Church Doctrine

By the Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith,
Committee on Church
Doctrine convener

When faced with complex situations, many of us ask trusted people for advice. We might speak with our minister to learn what the Bible says and hear their recommendations. We want to know how to live faithful to Jesus despite life's complexity. When the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada faces these kinds of issues, it does something similar—it asks the Committee on Church Doctrine (CCD).

The committee consists of 12 people from across the country, and one member from each of the colleges. Like the PCC, it is diverse and it depends on this diversity as it listens for God's wisdom. Then, it makes recommendations to the General Assembly (GA) on how Presbyterians can live faithful to Jesus Christ.

Here is a brief summary of what the CCD is working on this year:

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)

Laws in Canada have changed, and Presbyterians are grappling with how to respond. In 2023, the GA asked us to provide a recommendation on how we can respond "faithfully and practically in pastoral situations." As we struggle to articulate a response, we're asking questions like, "How is God present with those who choose MAiD?" And "What is a faithful response Presbyterians can offer to those who have chosen MAiD?" We're returning to what the GA has affirmed about



life and death. And we're soberly grappling with the dangers for our society and our understanding of God's mission in the world. We hope to answer the recommendation on time, at the next General Assembly.

Who are God's chosen people?

The question came through the assembly in 2023 because one of our standards, *Living Faith*, calls the church "The new Israel (section 1.2)." This theological issue is called supersessionism, and the CCD had made recommendations on this in the past. These recommendations were adopted as the official stance of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in 2010 and 2011. They affirmed that the PCC is not supersessionist; we do not believe the church has replaced the Jews as God's

chosen people. The CCD wanted to respond by referencing these past works. However, because *Living Faith* is a subordinate standard for the PCC, we asked the 2024 GA whether *Living Faith* should be changed, or noted. The Assembly decided to leave *Living Faith* unchanged, and provided a note. Now, we're crafting language for that note to clarify the PCC's belief, and to point readers to the statements already made.

The Doctrine of Discovery

As Europeans began exploring the globe, the church gave permission to seize lands and subjugate the Indigenous peoples in the name of Jesus Christ. This became known as the Doctrine of Discovery. Ever since, it has shaped interactions between Europeans and Indigenous people. The CCD has taken on an explo-

ration of how this doctrine has shaped the PCC. We are working with the National Indigenous Ministries Council, and gathering other resources, in hopes of contributing to the wider work of healing and reconciliation within the PCC.

New preambles to ordination vows

In 2017, GA asked the CCD to present new words to be spoken before the ordination vows. These preambles were to be written in "plain English" to make them more accessible to people of various backgrounds, including those for whom English is a second language. We formed a working group who developed various drafts and consulted with those in the intended audiences. In 2021, we asked the GA to consult the courts of the church. The committee received many great responses, including praise for a liturgical version we had included. The project was revised based on the feedback, and the committee sent the preambles to an editor for polishing. In 2024, after seven years of work, the GA adopted the new preambles.

Now, we're working on a liturgical version for use in worship. It's intended to be shorter, with phrasing that lends itself to being spoken by a congregation all together. It won't replace either

the new or original preambles but is intended to be used alongside them. We hope this will allow congregations and courts to select the version that best suits their context.

"Church and Nation"

During the difficult discussions the PCC recently came through, we worked on a number of papers, including one on the relationship between church and state. However, as our role in the key issue had mostly concluded, we faced a choice: Should we simply walk away from the project or offer something helpful to the PCC? We discerned a nudge to celebrate another of our subordinate standards: *The Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation*.

The year 2029 will mark the 75th anniversary of *The Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation*. We will be spending the next five years focused on the declaration, with a celebration on its diamond anniversary. In 2026, we will issue a report to offer context and background on the declaration, as well as a contemporary reflection on its 12 paragraphs. If GA approves a motion for study and engagement, it will be sent to the courts of the church in 2026 and 2027. Then, with feedback from the courts, we will prepare a final report, including a study guide, in time for the 75th Anniversary in 2029.

The Committee on Church Doctrine is grateful to be serving Christ and his church, doing our small part to help Presbyterians remain faithful to Jesus Christ while navigating the complexities of our world.

Following a work done through the Life and Mission Agency Committee, The Presbyterian Church in Canada officially repudiated the **Doctrine of Discovery** at the 2019 General Assembly. A webinar about the church's legacy of colonization and residential schools, which includes a discussion on how the Doctrine of Discovery shaped the church's policies and practices, is available under "educational resources" on the Indigenous Justice page of the Social Action Hub at presbyterian.ca/indigenous-justice. Additional educational materials can be found at presbyterian.ca/dod.

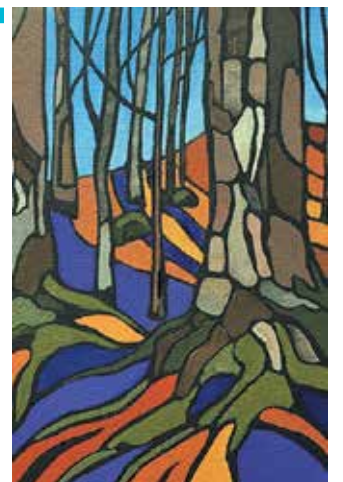


Weekly Bulletin Covers

PCC Sunday worship bulletin covers are available for every Sunday of the year at a cost of \$4.00 per 25 bulletins (shipping is free). This year, many bulletins feature images from the Presbyterian Church Archives reflecting the continuation of Christ's ministry in the PCC for the last 150 years.



Place an order online
at presbyterian.ca/bulletins
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History, Truth and Learning from the Past

By Allyson Carr, Justice Ministries

A common understanding of history is that it describes what happened in the past. People will have differing opinions on how value-neutral (or value-laden) history is or whether it is routinely told well, but typically, there's agreement on where "history" falls on a timeline.

Those living with intense grief from a loss or with trauma, painfully aware of how elements of their past are affecting them today, may give a different answer, though. It's been said that "the past is never really past," and if we look at many of the wars and conflicts today, we can see the truth in that statement on a large scale. Violence enacted against people and communities has long-term impacts. Anger at atrocities committed against one's family or community can last generations—and is compounded when the harms are ongoing. Trauma can leave people struggling to cope with everyday functioning and relationships, which can lead to further cycles of trauma, even in later generations. The loss of loved ones can feel like a hole in one's life, draining meaning and hope and making it difficult to connect with those around you.

Human experience learns from and builds on our past. When significant elements of that personal (or collective) past are deeply



painful, it is small wonder that the pain is what builds our present and shapes our future. Odds are that, having just read that sentence, you are thinking of an example right now of exactly such a situation—whether on the world stage or on a smaller level with someone you may know.

These first three paragraphs might ring true for many different people and may be worth considering in many different circumstances. But today, I—a white, immigrant settler who works at the PCC national office—am writing them in the wake of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (September 30th, also known as Orange Shirt Day). It is a day enacted to honour residential school Survivors, Intergenerational Survivors, and those children who never made it home, as well as to remember the traumatic legacy

caused by residential schools and colonization to generations of Indigenous families and nations. This is the trauma—and the past, present and future—I am speaking about here.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran 12 residential schools, and the traumatic effects of the schools on the lives of Survivors and their families are still causing immense harm today. Call to Action #59 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada says, "We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were

necessary." This learning is important, particularly for members of denominations who ran the schools, because otherwise, we can speak or act in ways that continue to perpetuate harm, such as residential school denialism, downplaying the impacts of the schools, or not understanding how the school's effects continue harming Indigenous people.

Apologies are necessary not just because of harm done in the past but also because that harm continues today. There has been much work done on the intergenerational effects of the schools: among other things, the increased likelihood for Survivors and intergenerational Survivors to struggle with ongoing physical and mental health impacts, experience food or housing insecurity, or violence. Whether by attending Indigenous-led events focused on reconciliation or in reports released by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, or from the office of the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, there are many places to hear from Survivors about the impacts of the schools. These are all important and good ways to learn.

Educational materials about the PCC's role in colonization and the schools are also available.

An online learning event on the PCC's legacy of colonization and residential schools was recently hosted. Beginning with discussing the Doctrine of Discovery and how attitudes stemming from it shaped the church's policies and practices, the webinar details the PCC's legacy of residential schools and colonization and the ways in which the church is trying to respond today. The webinar was recorded and is now available online on the Indigenous Justice page of the Social Action Hub, under educational resources: see presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/indigenous-justice/.

The church has adopted an Apology for its complicity in colonization and residential schools. The Apology, accessible online at the link above under "Official Statements of the Church," ends with five fundamental commitments to guide our actions and interactions going forward. Briefly, they are to continue to listen and learn from Indigenous people; to continue to respond to the TRC Calls to Action and reparation; to respect traditional Indigenous spiritual practices; to listen to and tell the truth about the past; and to support Indigenous-led healing and wellness initiatives and be in solidarity with Indigenous people. As the end of this year draws near and the church looks to a new year, it is good to root ourselves in these commitments and learn how we can act in line with them.

Facing Eco-Anxiety and the Climate Crisis

Webinar Resource Available

By Katharine Sisk, Justice Ministries

As the level of damage and impact of the climate crisis continues to rise, as it is predicted to do as global warming increases, people's fear and anxiety, tied to ecological destruction and the climate crisis, can also increase. These feelings are often referred to as eco-anxiety or climate anxiety.

Research is showing that these fears can trigger inner defence mechanisms that can be experienced as obsessive thoughts about the climate, fatalistic thinking, depression or panic, grief or sadness over the loss of natural

and/or home environments, trouble with sleeping and concentration, or existential dread, to name only a few. It can take a toll on the mind, body and spirit, especially when these fears and anxieties compromise or get in the way of our ability to take steps toward addressing the underlying problem: the climate crisis.

Anyone can experience eco-anxiety. But the research also shows that some people are more at risk. This includes marginalized communities who may have fewer resources to cope with the crisis, people in remote communities or regions that are at greater risk of



extreme effects of climate change (such as northern communities) and first responders, such as those working on the front line of weather-related disasters. Young people are also at greater risk.

How can we cope in ways that orient us toward hope and action?

Can faith help?

Drawing on trauma recovery theory and rooted in scripture, the Rev. Dr. Pamela McCarroll led a webinar earlier this year looking at how our fight, flight, freeze and fright stress responses to climate change and environmental destruction can impede our ability to respond directly to the climate crisis (e.g., through denial, indifference, fear, distraction, skepticism, etc.). Dr. McCarroll explored "habits of hope"—spiritual practices and reflections based on establishing a sense of safety, acknowledging loss (lament and mourning), and reconnecting with the world through engaged action, all of which can help to lessen the

negative impacts of these stress responses. Dr. McCarroll invites us to consider instead that eco-anxiety can be reframed in life-giving and life-serving ways and can reorient our focus and energy toward work that is aimed at mitigating or curbing the climate crisis.

You can access this webinar through the church's Social Action Hub at presbyterian.ca/justice/social-action/ecological-justice/ (click on the "Educational Resources" tab). The Rev. Dr. Pamela McCarroll, who led the webinar, is a Presbyterian minister and the Vice Principal and Jane and Geoffrey Martin Chair in Practical Theology at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto.

Diving Deep into Friendship with God



By Jacqueline Cleland, Oakridge Christian Ministry, part of the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C.

This summer at Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C., we were delighted and honoured to be able to host our first Vacation Bible School now that our new building has opened! We focused on deepening our understanding and friendship with God. One of the most powerful moments each day was hearing the kids shout affirma-

tions that God is a friend who is real, who loves, who we can trust forever and for everyone!

Our participants ranged from Sunday school regulars to our Chinese Language School, to neighbourhood kids who had never set foot in any iteration of our church before the summer camp.

For this camp we took the feedback of the community and expanded to a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. camp. We were lucky to have a full registration list, plus a waiting list of people who are inter-

ested in next year's programming. Activities involved songs, dance and actions to help physically embody the messages of God's love. Plus, we had incredible décor created from saved recycling, and used it in good stewardship to make undersea decorations.

The biggest takeaway was the idea of Jesus being the salt of the earth, and us being the eggs. Now if you put eggs in regular water they tend to sink to the dark bottom and stay there, but as you add Jesus to your life (and add

salt to your water), you will rise out of the depths. Plus, as some clever kids pointed out, when the Holy Spirit works within you can also rise up! It certainly showed an active engagement on the idea of what it means to have the trinity be your friend and have a plan to raise you up!

The theme song this year was "Thanks God," and we echo that sentiment of thanks to God for all the staff, volunteers, families, kids and youth who made this time of deep diving into friendship with God possible!

The Historic Relationship Between the Musqueam and Chinese People



Participants of the visit to the Canadian Chinese Museum.

By Jacqueline Cleland, Oakridge Christian Ministry, part of the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C.

On July 14, Oakridge Christian Ministry, a part of Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C., organized a visit to the Canadian Chinese Museum in a continued exploration of their historical friendship with the Musqueam people. This was sparked by our desire to have a personal land ac-

knowledge that highlighted our unique context.

In recent years, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has been wrestling with the reality of being part of the residential school system. Yet, as a congregation that is an ethnic minority that was also oppressed, it can be difficult to reconcile what our role is in this journey of reconciliation as we walk the road of both being Presbyterian and being oppressed. So, part of our journey was learn-

ing our unique historical context within the history of Canada relating to Indigenous people.

This learning commenced with discussions and workshops wrestling with how this topic touches our lives. On Nov. 19, 2023, we had a personal land acknowledgement workshop where we focused on themes such as what parts of God's creation shape us, what legacy we live with, and what is the Christian legacy we wish to leave behind.

We also wrestled with our own historical context. One struggle we face in Canada is the erasure of Chinese voices due to racism and other societal issues. For shocking context, at one point in Social Sciences textbooks there were only two sentences about the contribution of the Chinese to the Canadian Railway!

Yet, upon learning more, what we found surprised us and was a warming reminder of Christian love. In our praying, discussion with Elders, research and visit to the Chinese Canadian museum, we discovered (or rediscovered) our historic relation to the Musqueam people.

In 1885, Canada imposed a \$50 fee on immigrants arriving from China. That fee rose to \$500

by 1903, which was equivalent to about two years' salary at that time. That made things like affording food nearly impossible, and government restrictions did not permit immigrants to purchase land to grow their own food.

After the Indigenous people learned of the struggle their Chinese friends were facing, they began lobbying the government to be able to help. In 1909, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) agreed to let the Musqueam lease their reserve territory to Chinese farmers, with the DIA financially benefiting as the middleman. By 1917, we know of 18 Musqueam-Chinese leases that existed, covering 26 acres of land.

It is from this relationship and partnership that many Chinese Canadians were able to survive in Canada in the early years. It is with this deep appreciation of loving your neighbour like Christ calls us to do that helped our congregation be able to take root and grow in this soil.

To honour God's call to be a loving and unified community as Christians in the Oakridge Christian Ministry, we put together a land acknowledgement to hopefully reflect our learnings:

Oakridge Christian Ministry, a

part of the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church, is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. They helped feed the Chinese community in BC during a time of historical oppression. We celebrate that "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Psalm 24:1) and pray for a day when all of God's people are reconciled and live in right relationship with each other and Creation.

We know that reconciliation between all God's people and Creation is an active and engaged journey where we keep learning from one another on how to do better. We accept inspiration from the Presbyterian document called *Living Faith* that shares: "Though life is a gift from God, human life depends upon the created world. Our care for the world must reflect God's care. We are not owners, but stewards of God's good earth. Concerned with the well-being of all of life we welcome the truths and insights of all human skill and science about the world and the universe" (*Living Faith* 2.4.1).

If anyone wishes to learn more, please visit the Chinese Canadian Museum in person or online at chinesecanadianmuseum.ca.

The Better English Café

By Maggie McGregor, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.

The Better English Café at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in downtown Toronto, Ont., is now in its 10th year. Led by elder Allan Lever and our wonderful director, Oliver Shen, it has grown exponentially!

Each Tuesday evening from September through June, we provide an opportunity for newcomers to Canada, international students, and even visitors, to get together to improve their English conversational skills. By providing a friendly, welcoming space, along with coffee, tea and treats, our wonderful volunteers not only help our participants to feel more comfortable speaking English, they act as a resource for information about Toronto and Canada, and they encourage everyone to socialize and to make friends.

The volunteers themselves come from diverse backgrounds and range in age from university students to retirees. About 50% of them are from the congregation and the balance are people from the community who heard about the program and wanted to help.

Last year, we had over 4,000 attendees, an increase of over 1,000 from the year before! Our final evening in June saw 150 people attending, along with approximately 25 volunteers. And what is even more impressive is the number of returnees from week to week—that final evening saw 120 of them. Some of the participants have gone on to volunteer with our Out of the Cold program, others have joined our SingTO community choir, and others have even started to attend worship services.

The demographic breakdown of participants has changed over the years, and often reflects the



political and economic events happening in the world. The 1,000 new people that we welcomed last year listed 41 languages as their mother tongue. The top ten languages were Spanish (218), Japanese (181), Korean (165), Mandarin (99), Turkish (63), Farsi (50), Portuguese (44), French (35), Cantonese (27) and Russian (26).

Some of the increase in number can be attributed to the fact

that so many churches who were running similar programs did not resume after Covid. We managed to continue online during lockdown, but we are very happy to be back in person.

We would like to encourage other churches to consider opening their space for a similar evening as the need is so great. You just need a room, some tables and chairs, and volunteers. The volunteers do not need to be

English teachers—we call our facilitators, and they only need a decent grasp of English and to be willing to encourage others. A different topic is created each week along with suggested questions in order to get the ball rolling and to give some structure to the evening. But the most important thing is to get people speaking, and if that occurs while discussing something completely different, then so be it!

Reforming Preaching Initiative Launches at Knox College

By John Borthwick, Director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning at Knox College in Toronto, Ont.

In January of 2024, the Rev. Dr. Sarah Travis was appointed Associate Professor and the Ewart Chair in the Practice of Ministry and Faith Formation at Knox College in Toronto, Ont. This new position at Knox encompasses homiletics (preaching), worship, and theological and practical formation. Sarah's special interest is preaching, with an emphasis on how sermons form the identities and ethics of faith communities. She believes that over time, sermons shape who we are and how we behave as God's people in the world.

Striving to make a difference in the church today in the practice of

preaching, Sarah launched Knox College's Reforming Preaching Initiative. This collaborative work with Ministry Forum (Knox College's Centre for Lifelong Learning) seeks to support both novice and experienced preachers, lay and ordained. Its goals are simply to "re-form" the preaching of experienced preachers, "form" the preaching of novice ones, and determine if novice and experienced preachers can learn from each other.

Over the coming year, various projects will emerge from this initiative. In March 2025, sponsored by the Lois Klempa Lectureship, Knox College will host Tending Tomorrow, where Canadian women homileticians will reflect on the future of preaching in Canada. This event brings together four women

who teach homiletics in institutions across Canada to reflect on the current state of preaching in Canada and imagine future directions. What are the trends and movements in preaching that will guide Canadian congregations to embrace the future with hope? What does it mean to preach gospel within a rapidly changing, diverse Canada? The full day event will include contributions by Drs. Sarah Travis (Knox College), Joni Sancken (Vancouver School of Theology), Sarah Han (Tyndale University) and HyeRan Kim-Cragg (Emmanuel College).

Finally, Sarah was a recipient of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Vital Worship, Vital Preaching Grant to experiment with a weekend retreat experience for novice and experienced



The Rev. Dr. Sarah Travis.

preachers. This retreat is aimed at building a cohort of preachers who can mentor one another through the preaching process in the weeks and months beyond the retreat. Grant monies will allow for a pilot of this program to offer three retreats in southern Ontario and Quebec over the Spring of 2025. Participants will gather in groups of no more than 10 to 12 people in a beautiful retreat setting from Friday evening until Sunday morning. With the support of the grant and resources from Knox College, registration costs will be kept relatively low. For more information, either subscribe to the Ministry Forum weekly emails or check the website ministryforum.ca for updates.

An application process and reg-

istration for these retreats will take place in late Fall 2024. Preachers (lay or ordained, experienced or beginner) are invited to apply by answering a few questions about their personal preaching goals and practices.

Sarah offers this encouragement to those who seek to nurture their own practice of preaching today: "The practice of preaching can be difficult and lonely. While preaching will never be easy, it is meant to be a collaborative process. The Word belongs to us in community—together we interpret, we share our experiences with God's life among us, we wrestle with texts and contexts. Our sermons will be more effective and faithful if we can draw on one another's wisdom. The Reforming Preaching Initiative is about how we can be transformed by companions we meet on the road. Through the Holy Spirit, our conversations will be rich and diverse, helping us come to a deeper knowledge of God's action in the world."

Please contact the Rev. Dr. Sarah Travis at sarah.travis@utoronto.ca or the Rev. John Borthwick at john.borthwick@utoronto.ca for more information about the Reforming Preaching Initiative.

Christian Formation on the Edges of Western Culture

New Conference hosted by Cultivate Collective at St. Andrew's Hall



Stefan Paas.

By Andrea Perrett, Associate with the Centre for Missional Leadership, St. Andrew's Hall in Vancouver, B.C.

What are the rhythms of your worshipping community? Does your congregation gather for worship each Sunday, or do you gather for smaller house church worship on alternating Sundays? What rituals or practices do you use to have meaningful gatherings for your community, and to foster Christian formation? How do you navigate the demands and expectations of paid leadership and clergy? What does multi-vocational ministry look like in your context?

The speakers and participants asked these questions during the Rhythms & Rituals conference held at St. Andrew's Hall in Vancouver, B.C., in May.

Cultivate: Missional Church Planting Collective, an initiative of the Centre for Missional Leadership (CML), hosted 60 people for this three-day event on the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus. Together, participants and speakers explored how the rhythms and rituals of worship gatherings and church leadership are being adapted in different contexts.

Grown out of the CML's commitment to equipping missional leaders of new witnessing communities, this conference set out to not only host an academic conference or a practice-based conference but to host a conference where academics and practitioners could come together. CML as-

sociate Tim Dickau described this as a "prac-ademic" conference.

Taking a shamelessly Canadian approach, the conference looked at the research on Canadian church start-ups and listened to stories and teachings from those leaders who are doing the work of starting and sustaining new communities. While there is an excess of books and publications to provide tips and tricks for starting and growing a new church in the United States, these resources are not as helpful in Canada, where church attendance is in decline and denominations have limited resources to fund church plants. Taking the reality of the Canadian post-Christian landscape seriously, this conference explored how some of the established rhythms and rituals of church plants, and existing congregations, are adapting and changing to help sustain witnessing communities.

Participants attended the conference from coast to coast across Canada, along with a few friends from the U.S., with at least ten denominations represented. Conference participants were not only church planters but also congregation leaders, academics, students, para-church or NGO leaders, church staff and session leaders, and those who were curious about how the church is adapting to our changing context.

While the Canadian context was necessary, the keynote speaker was from Europe, where they have been navigating a post-Christian landscape for decades. Dr. Stefan Paas, a missiologist with the Free

University of Amsterdam, shared stories of his own work as a church planter and presented his research on European church plants to help provide a glimpse of how starting and sustaining witnessing communities looks different. Dr. Paas also delivered a public lecture at a local church on his latest book, *Pilgrims and Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society*.

The three days of the conference were full, with the content rotating between academic lectures and workshops with practitioners (some of whom are academics!). Storytelling was featured throughout the conference, with church leaders sharing how the rhythms and rituals have shifted in their own context. Storytellers included PCC leaders: the Rev. Stephen Kwon with the Well Church in Mississauga, Ont.; and the Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith with St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Nanaimo/UpperLVL Worship.

The highlights of the topics at the conference included multi-vocational ministry, stories of

replanting churches, online ministry, and adapting gatherings for reconciliation. While the days were busy, there was still plenty of time for participants to connect with one another, where old friends were able to catch up and new friendships were begun.

The conference experience was made richer by the presence of other new church development workers in the PCC. We also all benefited from the Rev. Glen Soderholm—musician, church planter, and a coordinator of the denomination's new congregational development work—providing the worship music at the conference.

While there are many challenges for new and established churches across Canada, this conference, hosted by the Cultivate Collective, helped to share a narrative that was shaped by innovation, adaptation and responding to God's witness in the world. While the Canadian church landscape is shifting, leaders are faithfully shifting the rhythms and rituals of churches, creating and



Glen Soderholm.

sustaining spaces of hopeful witness. The conference helped to share a glimpse of the Christian church that is emerging from our post-Christian landscape.

The next conference will take place April 30 – May 2, 2026. Watch for more information posted at standrews.edu.



Youth Ministry in Owen Sound

With an \$8,000 grant from The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Creative Ministry with Children and Youth Fund, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Owen Sound, Ont., was able to hire Tristan Paylor to coordinate youth and outreach ministry.

Since January, the congregation's new youth group has met twice a month after school for games, dinner and worship. Members of the church generously donated a Ping-Pong table, air hockey table, and a closet full of games for the youth to enjoy. The kids report that they enjoy the food, games, prayers, discussion questions, and the staff and volunteers who spend their time with them.

Pictured here is lead minister the Rev. Ed Hoekstra having a friendly arm-wrestling match with the kids during a recent youth group barbecue!



Equip and Encourage Conference in Montreal



A picture of birds, made by ministers in an art session, taped to The Presbyterian College window.

By the Rev. Liz Chan, St. Andrew's, Kars and Osgoode, Vernon Presbyterian Churches, Ont.

For four days in May, I had the joy of attending The Presbyterian College's Equip and Encourage Conference for the first time. It is a space set apart for ministry leaders to be encouraged and renewed for ministry. I had wanted to attend the conference ever since I received my diploma from Presbyterian College in 2016, but new life circumstances—such as having a baby, plus the pandemic—brought new priorities.

So, this was my year! I went feeling excited, tired and a little uncertain of what the time would be like. But the experience exceeded my expectations. Why was this?

It could have been the fellowship with other ministers from coast to coast. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was represent-

ed from Newfoundland to British Columbia. There was a contingent of us from the Ottawa area and other parts of Ontario as well.

It could have been the worship, led every day by young students at McGill University who attended churches in Montreal, and included a pianist, violinist and cellist—all beautifully honouring God with their musical gifts and leading us into the presence of Jesus each morning. We were also treated to a worship night led by a young Ghanaian man on the piano.

It could have been the fact that we were in Montreal, a city filled with great food, drinks and architecture. I took morning walks up near Mont Royal with my journal to a coffee shop and enjoyed a time of prayer and a chat with the Lebanese barista.

It could have been the way we were treated to experience God's presence through art. There was

a poetry reading in the evening as well as a morning of creativity, where we were led by a local artist to design, colour, cut out and tape various types of birds into a stained-glass masterpiece on the college windows. This tied into our morning worship time, during which we discussed Jesus, saying: If God cares about the birds of the sky, how much more will God care for us?

It could have been the speakers, who were excellent. Carmen Joy Imes spoke about her books, *Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters* and *Becoming God's Family: Why the Church Still Matters*. She encouraged us with her biblical study and kept us centred in our identity.

Tim Keener led us in a seminar on Communities as Mission, helping us to see the communities where God has planted us in the context of the "Geography of Grace." He challenged us to dissect what scarcity and abundance look like in our own contexts, and to begin to trust that Jesus is growing the branches of his kingdom through our very small mustard seeds of faith.

Matthew Ruttan led us through some thoughts on using technology for ministry, giving tips on blogging, sending group emails for communicating information to congregations, keeping websites simple and having good boundaries as ministers with regard to availability, texting and rest time.

Andrea Foster encouraged us with her personal experiences on the information and which questions to pose regarding worship

and disability, and ways to make worship services accessible for everyone. She reminded us that, "people with disabilities are not a problem to be fixed or an issue to be handled. But each one is an image bearer of God who needs to know Jesus and experience his love, as all people do."

The Equip and Encourage Conference could have exceeded my expectations because it only cost \$155, plus my train ticket, which was easily covered through my Minister's Education Leave.

But overall, what exceeded my expectations about this conference were the people who planned and prayed about it, the people who gave financially so that this conference can exist, and the staff of Roland De Vries, Adrian Langdon and others who graciously listened to our concerns. The speakers, worship leaders, and ministers who attended all did so with a spirit of humility, joy and willingness to

engage with each other.

The presence of the Holy Spirit with us was seen in: the fruit of deeper connections and understanding of each other; generosity of time and space for good conversations; respect and love for each opinion; shared laughter; and, unity remembering that we are all loved by an eternal God, called to follow Jesus, and designed uniquely to love and serve our Lord together in this world God created.

Next year's Equip and Encourage Conference at The Presbyterian College will be held from Tuesday, May 13, to Friday, May 16, 2025. The keynote speaker will be Tod Bolsinger, whose books include *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* and *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders are Formed in the Crucible of Change*. Watch for more details at presbyteriancollege.ca. Hope to see you there!



Megan Patterson, Liz Chan, Denise Allen-Macartney and Reine Boghos.

A Honey of a Church

By Arlene Baker, Barney's River Presbyterian Church in Pictou County, N.S.

Barney's River Presbyterian Church is in Kenzieville, Pictou County, N.S. and doing what it can to support itself and the greater church community.

Patricia Smith is offering pastoral leadership as she works toward becoming an ordained minister. Her husband is Jim, and one of his hobbies is being a beekeeper. He produces the best honey! A few years ago,

they set up a table in the foyer of the church with bottles of honey available for a donation to support Presbyterians Sharing. Through their generosity of honey over the years, our church has been able to surpass the recommended allocation amount for Presbyterians Sharing!

Last summer, we held a Sunday fun day after the worship service, where all members of the community were welcome. A picnic lunch and a wonderful afternoon was enjoyed by all.

Our congregation has some

families with young children who are involved in extracurricular activities that keep the family away from Sunday morning worship services. Some church members thought about this, and they came up with a solution: let's try a Sunday service at 5 p.m., with a simple light supper to follow. On March 26, 2023, the first Sunday evening service was held, and the light supper turned out to be more than anyone anticipated due to a generous congregation with great cooking skills. It was a great evening enjoyed by all, and even-



ing services are now held the last Sunday of the month.

If you would like to sample a bottle of St. James honey and are in the area, please join us for

Sunday worship. With the changing times and needs, our congregation is working to adapt so that the church is still a part of everyone's life.

Prayer Walk: A Community United in Faith



The Rev. Sandrah Mashingaidze.

*By the Rev. Sandrah Mashingaidze,
Wexford Presbyterian Church in
Scarborough, Ont., and Knox
Agincourt Presbyterian Church in
Toronto, Ont.*

On August 24, Wexford Presbyterian Church in Scarborough and Knox Agincourt Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., came together as a community for a significant and moving event: a community prayer walk. This gathering was more than just a walk—it was a testament to the power of unity, faith and collective prayer.

With the theme “A Community that Prays Together Stays To-

gether,” we drew inspiration from the deep compassion that Jesus showed when he wept for Jerusalem, and from the prophet Jeremiah, who mourned for his city.

We prayed fervently for peace in our streets, the end of violence, the well-being of our schools, hospitals, and the justice that all people deserve. Our prayers also reached out to our leaders, asking for wisdom, compassion and integrity as they guide our city through challenging times.

Our prayers included the people in uniform who serve our city, acknowledging their sacrifices and the challenges they face daily. Funeral home directors also joined us, and we took the opportunity to remember the difficult and often overlooked work they do in our times of loss. Our prayers extended to all those affected by violence in our communities. We especially focused on youth, who are navigating a world full of uncertainties and challenges. As we walked and prayed together, it was evident that our city is filled with people who are searching for hope, and it is our mission to offer them the light of Christ.



We were blessed to be joined by local Members of Parliament Salma Zahid and Jean Yip, along with religious leaders from various denominations who added a beautiful sense of unity and purpose to the walk. It became clear that when we stand together in prayer, we can truly be a light in our communities, offering hope where it is desperately needed.

We also prayed for a much-needed spiritual renewal. As we see empty pews in our churches and fewer young people attending worship services, our hearts are burdened for the future of our faith communities. We lifted our voices to God, asking for a revival in the hearts of the people in Scarborough, especially among the younger generation. We prayed that our churches would once again be filled with those seeking a deeper connection with God, and that the barriers keeping people away from the church would be broken down.

This prayer walk was not just an event organized by one church



Participants in the community prayer walk in Scarborough, Ont., on August 24.

or denomination, it was a collaborative effort. We were joined by churches and leaders from various denominations, all coming together with one purpose: to seek God’s intervention and blessings for Scarborough. This diverse gathering was a powerful reminder that despite our different backgrounds, we share a common hope for a better, safer and more just city.

The success of this prayer walk is a testament to what can happen when we come together in faith and purpose. It was a day of unity, reflection and, most impor-

tantly, prayer. As we walked the streets of Scarborough, we felt a renewed sense of hope and commitment to our city.

This event has set a foundation for what will now become an annual tradition. We look forward to continuing this prayer walk each year, knowing that our collective prayers and actions can make a difference in our community. Let us continue to follow the example of Jesus, weeping and praying for our city, trusting that God will hear and respond to our cries for peace, justice, healing and spiritual renewal in Scarborough.

Using Music to Bring People In

*By Dr. Marcus Scholtes,
Director of Music Ministries,
Central Presbyterian Church in
Hamilton, Ont.*

Churches everywhere are asking the same questions: How can we reach more people? How can we bring more people into our sacred space? In our secular world, the second question seems quite daunting, oftentimes impossible. One strategy that has been working for us at Central Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., is using music to bring people in.

I began as the director of Music Ministries at Central in January 2023. It was immediately apparent that this was a place to put down roots and start creating. From my work as a freelance

musician in the GTA, I’ve seen firsthand how effective recital series and concert events can be at creating a “buzz” in the community. Central is perfectly situated to start something: it’s located in downtown Hamilton, in a residential neighbourhood surrounded by a number of high-rise buildings, and is home to people from all walks of life, including young families and retirees—all people who could potentially be interested in hearing live music. And so I created the Music@Central Sunday Matinee Recital Series.

From the beginning, it was my goal to present high quality music performed by professional musicians. I also wanted to be able to offer these concerts for free and with donations, thereby creating a

barrier-free event that is accessible to everyone, with no pressure to pay for a ticket.

Now the next question: How to pay for this new concert series? I had a bit of seed money from Central, and a successful application for an external community grant, which enabled us to offer artist honorariums. In the first season, I volunteered myself to perform at several of the concerts, and called in some favours from friends and colleagues who generously donated their time and talents to help the series get started. I am so grateful for all the support I received in these initial stages. And thus Music@Central was born!

It’s been a passion project, but moreover, I am seeing the positive impact it is having in our commu-



Dr. Marcus Scholtes.

nity as well. Central is in an area of Hamilton where there are several affordable housing projects, rental apartments geared toward lower-income families, many elderly and retired people, as well as many families with children. For all these groups, attending a ticketed event might be out of their financial reach, and I want to make high quality music accessible to everyone. Music@Central provides these neighbours with a regular community event to attend, and exposes the children to an art form they might not necessarily engage in, so there’s an added educational

perspective. Similarly, some families in this neighbourhood most likely have never entered a church before, and attending a Sunday matinee recital is an opportunity to get them in the door. Of course, the hope is that all these people will be intrigued by these amazing events hosted by a church with a beautiful sanctuary. So, all in all, it’s much more than just a recital series, it’s community outreach, and a way of bringing people in. If we truly think of “Music as Ministry” this is a project I am happy and willing to pour my passion into.

Now that Music@Central’s second season has begun, it is almost self-sustaining. Through savvy social media campaigns, we have augmented Central’s followers on Facebook and Instagram, with many non-Central people attending our Music@Central events. Our attendee numbers grow with every concert, and we are seeing a regular core of people develop who are interested in our events. It is inspiring to see and I’m extremely optimistic about how we will grow.

Gathering for a Better Future: Indigenous Friendship Day



The Moderator addresses the crowd.

By the Rev. Peter Coutts, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., wanted to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation through a future-oriented event with a positive spirit. So, the first coming together was to work with the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary and Brown Bear Woman Events from the Tsuut'ina Nation to create an event highlighting Indigenous culture. The day included telling of traditional stories, a demonstration on how to set up a tipi, the chance to play traditional Indigenous games, dance presentations, tasting pemmican, and trying one's hand at beading. We prepared bison stew and bannock and about 400 people shared in the free meal. We had a few important speakers launch the day: Bruce Starlight (a respected Elder from the Tsuut'ina Nation), Carmen Lasante (Captain of Métis Nation District 6) as well as the Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls (Moderator of The Presbyterian Church in Canada).

While people came from all over the city, the event was primarily for the people of the Kingsland and Haysboro neighbourhoods—the immediate neighbours of St. Andrew's church. Our congregational mission statement is: "Woven into the Neighbourhood, Growing Disciples who Love like Jesus." We decided to focus on these immediate neighbourhoods, which happen to include some 600 Indigenous residents. We had about 500 participants that day, where neighbour could be with neighbour.

It was also good for St. Andrew's as it was a day for us to be together. We had more than 90 congregant volunteers who made this event possible. Joining us in financial support, through grants, were the Province of Alberta, the City of Calgary, the Calgary Foundation and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Calgary also provided support by letting us use city property and a city parking lot for free. We had many great partners, and God provided great weather!

But I think the best part of coming together were the many informal one-on-one conversations, especially between Indigenous participants and those with a settler background. These were occasions for learning, mutual understanding, growing in appreciation, and changed perspectives. As one of the event organizers, seeing these conversations made the work feel most satisfying.

What did those conversations mean? Here are two stories.

A Calgarian was supporting a family of Afghan refugees. As this family was new to Canada, the Calgarian thought our event would be a great introduction to the Indigenous people of Canada and their culture. The youngest son, about 6 years old, won a raffle prize of a dream catcher, provided by the Aboriginal Friendship Centre. The Indigenous artisan who made the dream catcher explained its meaning: to protect sleepers, especially children, from bad dreams and nightmares. It was only then that the artisan learned something about the boy: that he was having bad dreams that reached back to his experience in his homeland. The boy left the day with a smile on his face, thinking that maybe nighttime would soon be easier. A kind of healing perhaps?

A Métis woman attended and was enthusiastically involved throughout the day. She'd grown up in the city and was never pestered in school because she didn't look like she had any Indigenous ancestry, but her brother looked different than her and suffered for it. The woman learned from her experience that it was better to never let on that she was Métis. A few years ago, she attended an

event like ours that awakened an interest in her ancestral culture. When she came to our event, she was wearing a ribbon skirt and spent the day talking to everyone! In the afternoon, she met two young Indigenous men who had missed the bison stew service at lunch, so she led them over to the church kitchen where they were able to get fed. She was glad for our event, because it was part of her own healing story learning about and embracing her heritage. Another story of healing.

And that was really at the heart of our reason for organizing this event: healing. Several times our Indigenous speakers called us "brave" for organizing the event and for all who attended. Brave, in that we wanted to demonstrate that positive new ways forward were not only possible, but necessary. That new way was demonstrated through the closing circle dance that had 225 participants. It was a very big circle! But it needs to become even bigger, doesn't it?

Yes, it was good to be together.



Indigenous Friendship Day in Calgary. PHOTO CREDITS: SPENCER BRIDGEMOHAN

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Calgary received a grant of \$4,000 from The Presbyterian Church in Canada for the Indigenous Friendship Day from the Avondbloem Experimental Fund, which helps to support projects that are innovative or creative in nature. To learn more about grants from the PCC, visit presbyterian.ca/funds.

Reaching Out Through Song and Dance

By Cathy Sosnowsky, West Vancouver Presbyterian Church

Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy (Psalm 33:3).

Let them praise his name with dancing and make music with tambourine and harp (Psalm 149:3).

In Spring of 2023, West Vancouver Presbyterian Church (WVPC) in Vancouver, B.C., began a “Wanna Dance?” program to reach out to its neighbours. Because West Vancouver is acknowledged as one of the wealthiest communities in Canada, this little Presbyterian church, situated among multi-million-dollar homes, did not consider offering free lunches

or dinners as an outreach. It recognized instead that among these wealthy residents and their nannies were many lonely people needing a way to connect with a joy-giving and loving community.

Fortunately, the church had among its members a teacher of ballroom dancing. Heather Dunn (now known as the church’s “Minister of Dance”) could also teach line dancing and other popular dances, like the Hustle. The newly formed “Wanna Dance?” committee decided to make their offerings multi-cultural. Among the church members was a retired teacher of Scottish Country Dancing and a woman from Cameroon who could teach African dancing. A local teacher of Persian dancing and a Métis dance instructor



A joyful leader, Kelly Nobles encourages all to sing.

could be hired. Thus, the program began with a different cultural offering each month.

Posters at local coffee houses and ads in local newspapers invited the public to join in. Soon, on Saturday afternoons, once a month, the church’s lower hall was filled with music, movement and laughter. Among the 20 to 30 dancers were the church and the un-churched, do-si-doing and two-stepping together. At break time, over tea, coffee, cookies and cucumber water, brief life stories were exchanged. There was no pressure to convert or to turn up on Sunday morning,

though the invitation was there.

Encouraged by the success of the dance offering, this spring WVPC launched a “Wanna Sing?” program, again, once a month, on a Saturday afternoon. Kelly Nobles, WVPC Music Director and leader of the program, maintains that anyone can sing and that the joy of singing together can be experienced by people with both trained and untrained voices. The aim of this second and concurrent offering is to give some voice training, but mainly to invite people together to have fun expressing their love of music out loud. The



Neighbours and friends join together in a Métis “shout out.”

music used is not “churchy,” but rather, for starters, the music of the 1950s (such as “Wake up, Little Susie” and “Fly Me to the Moon”) and on another Saturday, music from Broadway musicals.

Will those who don’t regularly (or ever) attend church feel more comfortable in a church setting after having danced or sung in their local church basement? Well, yes, that is a hope. One thing they will now know is that “churchy people”—even Presbyterians—are capable of expressing joy through song and dance, and are open to welcoming all neighbours.



Young Adults at the Montreal Pride Parade (left to right): Aaron, Christine, Emma, Anna and Angela.



Terry in his natural element in the kitchen, with Margarita and Srikanta.



The musicians at the garden service: Robert Koffend on piano and Elizabeth Tragash on the saxophone.

Can We Celebrate Pride?

By Aaron Law, Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal, Que.

“We have heard that ‘pride goeth before a fall,’” the Rev. Dr. Robert Faris proclaimed from the pulpit of the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal, Que., on the bright Sunday morning of August 11. “Scripture articulates warnings about pride. Pride is one of the defilements that come from the human heart, it is at the top of the list of the seven deadly sins.” But then, Bob challenged us with this question, “Can we celebrate a day called ‘Pride’?”

If you found yourself around our church that weekend, you would have seen the colourful rainbow flags that decorated the

church. The six-banded flags waved with the breeze and beckoned visitors to mount the steps and peek inside. They would have stepped into a sanctum that sheltered gay Christians in decades past, witnessing the Word of God preached through the voice of a gay minister. Our congregation takes great pride in this piece of our history.

We filled the seats of Kildonan Hall with an eager audience that Friday. Guests had come to listen to a jazz performance, given by the talented Elizabeth Tragash and her band, the Open House Jazz Collective. In accompaniment was the exquisite supper planned and prepared by Terry and his husband, Alain. It was a delightful evening—all three of them got

to take well-deserved pride in the fruits of their creative labour.

And on Sunday morning, we gathered in the Quiet Garden in worship of God. The air rang with joyful adoration. It was a jubilant celebration of wheat and wine, of God’s gift of grace, of true genuine pride in who God has made us to be.

“Each of us is needed to proclaim and to live into God’s reign, bursting in upon us in the world that God has called good, and we can take pride in that,” concluded the Rev. Dr. Faris. We carried that pride with our heads held high, marching in the Montreal Pride Parade. God sees me, and God walks beside me. His banner over me is love.



The Rev. Dr. Robert Faris celebrating Holy Communion with the Rev. Susan Brasier.



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New Beginnings in Kitchener



By the Rev. Jen Sokolowsky,
Doon Presbyterian Church in
Kitchener, Ont.

Many churches today seek transformation, yet do not know where to start. The Transformational Ministry Weekend (TMW) is a major part of the New Beginnings program offered through The Presbyterian Church in Canada, preparing people to enter into a journey of discernment so that the congregation can make bold decisions and take the necessary steps in the direction of transformation.

As a New Beginnings Guide, I had the opportunity this past Fall to lead a TMW for Beaches Presbyterian Church in Toronto. This congregation is one of over 30 churches in the PCC that have entered the New Beginnings process, seeking to (re)discover who they are and who God is calling them to be. I also happen to be serving as interim minister with Doon Church in Kitchener, which is in the midst of the New Beginnings process. These are exciting times for both congregations!

New Beginnings is for the congregation that knows it can't stay as it is, but isn't sure what move to make next. It's for the congregation that is seeking to be faithful in this time and place. It's for the congregation that wants to say "Yes!" to God's Spirit's movement among them but isn't sure what that "yes" could be.

New Beginnings centres on where the deep passion of a congregation intersects with their neighbourhood's greatest need. It encourages congregations to move beyond their buildings and out into the community.

New Beginnings has four phases: An assessment, a transformational weekend, discernment and implementation.

- **Phase 1:** An Assessor visits the church to gather stories of how God has been present in the ministry to get a more

complete picture of the congregation's story and situation. Following the assessment visit, the congregation will receive a comprehensive assessment report (to be handed out after the first small group session), including the church's assets, demographic and neighbourhood trends in the community, and three potential "future stories" of where God might be leading the church.

- **Phase 2:** A fun weekend (Transformational Ministry Weekend) where the congregation gathers to learn about the New Beginnings process, house group leaders are trained, and worship is shared. The Sunday worship time also includes a time of covenanting as the congregation says "yes" to this transformational process.

- **Phase 3:** The house group meetings and discernment provide participants with an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations, to wrestle with the challenges of ministry, and to pray together about the future to which God may be calling the congregation. At the end of the house group process, facilitators will gather the comments into a report clarifying the underlying themes shared in the house group meetings and discern a future direction for the congregation which will then be shared with the congregation

- **Phase 4:** The implementation phase is when a team formed by Session develops an action plan and experiments on how to live into its future story.

On a warm Friday night in early October, Beaches PC in Toronto gathered for the New Beginnings Transformational Weekend. While acknowledging the challenging reality churches face today, we

turned toward wonder, dreaming and possibility. We named that we can't expect different results by doing the same thing over and over again. We named that we need to shift our thinking about long-held assumptions such as, "Did Jesus say we needed a large congregation with a beautiful building and lots of money... or did he call us to 'go, and love in his name?'" We named how we get so caught up in worrying about our survival that we forget the Great Commission and the Greatest Commandment. Next, we talked about how hard change can be for some people. Finally, we explored the difference between tinkering and transformation, naming that New Beginnings requires patience to notice the changing conditions both within and around us beyond our front doors, and the need make a bold decision.

When a congregation like Beaches or Doon says "yes" to New Beginnings, they are intentionally seeking how the Spirit is leading them forward in this time and place. They are setting their own desires, wants and needs aside so that they can look outwardly to what could be possible. It's exciting, bold, scary and it's an incredible journey as a congregation learns and discerns, seeks and explores. New Beginnings isn't about solving the problems of yesterday's church—sure, we can name those problems, but we aren't solving them. Rather, New Beginnings seeks to help congregations adapt to a new way of being and doing, living and sharing God's mission right where they find themselves.

If you would like to hear more about my experiences with New Beginnings, contact me at jsokolowsky@gmail.com.

For more information on the New Beginnings program, contact Paul Kang, New Beginnings Program Coordinator, at pkang@presbyterian.ca.

50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women as Elders at New St. James



Shirley McNair (left) and Elizabeth Scott were ordained as the first women elders at New St. James Presbyterian Church on April 28, 1974.

By Elizabeth Harris, Dr. Susan McNair and Charlene Beynon, New St. James Presbyterian Church in London, Ont.

Women eldership in the PCC

Did you know that the PCC began the discussion about the ordination of women as ruling elders and ministers in 1953? This dialogue continued for 13 years. In 1966, the Declaratory Act was passed, allowing women to be ordained as ruling elders and ministers. Despite this outcome, significant discussions regarding the role of women within the church continued. The United Church of Canada (1936), Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (1947) and the Presbyterian Church (USA) (1956) had already made this decision, while the Anglican Church of Canada and the Lutheran Church of Canada did not make this decision until the



The worship service celebrated the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women as elders at NSJ, while recognizing the role of the Session and honouring elders, emeritus, past and current.

mid-1970's (see presbyterian.ca/ordination-of-women).

An historic milestone at New St. James

On April 28, 1974, Shirley McNair and Elizabeth Scott were the first women to join the Session at New St. James Presbyterian Church (NSJ) in London, Ont. The Rev. Dr. Richard Stewart and the Rev. Duncan Farris were the minister and assistant minister respectively. Finding a photo of this historic event launched a very special celebration.

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary

On June 23, 2024, the congregation celebrated this significant milestone. The event was enthusiastically supported by the Rev. Dr. David Clark, Clerk of Session Bruce Curtis, the Session, and most importantly, the congregation. Announcements were made regularly to promote the upcoming celebration. The event was planned and organized by elder emeritus Elizabeth Harris and current elders Dr. Susan McNair and Charlene Beynon.

Family members of women elders who had passed away were invited through personal correspondence, along with emeritus and past elders and special guests who had served NSJ in a variety of capacities. The responses to the correspondence were uplifting. Many travelled significant distances to attend. Despite holding the celebration during a heat wave and a very warm sanctuary, 144 attended.

The worship service was carefully prepared and customized for the celebration, including words of welcome, a children's story, sermon, prayers, selected hymns and a powerful solo. Session members were engaged in a variety of ways and women elders served as ushers. The scriptures were read by a woman elder and the flowers on the Communion Table were in memory of women elders who had passed away. A Mission Moment during the service included a brief overview of events within the PCC that allowed women to be ordained as ruling elders, and which led to two exceptional women joining the Session at NSJ. Plans were also shared about securing a commemorative gift for the sanctuary to honour this historic anniversary.

The Mission Moment con-

cluded with a time of remembrance and silence as the names of each of the women elders who had passed away were read and celebrated. The service was very positively received by those in the sanctuary and those worshipping through live streaming.

The Board of Managers hosted a reception, complete with balloons and specially selected refreshments. Two former ministers, the Rev. Dr. Leslie Files and the Rev. Andrew Reid shared very positive memories and stories of working with women elders during their ministry at NSJ. There was a display of memorabilia that showcased pictures, newsletters and the Annual Report from 1974, as well as handouts about memorial windows at NSJ featuring women and what was happening in 1974 at NSJ, locally and beyond. The display also included a word puzzle about NSJ, a series of resources showcasing our history and a video montage highlighting activities at NSJ in 1974. Many photos were taken during the service and the reception.

In addition, participants were invited to share their favourite memory of NSJ on "memory cards" provided at each table. The responses generated many personal memories of what NSJ means to them, including recollections about meaningful worship,



Three generations of the family of Shirley McNair, one of the first women elders (who later also served as the Clerk of Session for many years) joined the celebration.

pageants, Christmas Eve services, receiving support during challenging times, music, congregational dinners, rummage sales, bazaars, talent nights, support for the LG-BTQI+ community and more.

The NSJ Hall was filled with energy as participants visited, renewed connections and established new ones. Many expressed their thanks for being invited and were in no hurry to leave. Notes of thanks reinforced these sentiments, including expressions of gratitude for being invited, reliving many positive memories by being back at NSJ, the impact of a very meaningful service, the opportunity to reconnect with many,

including past ministers, and enjoying a time of fellowship during the reception.

Looking back

The service and the reception offered many blessings, including an opportunity to celebrate and highlight the role of Session and all Session members, emeritus, past and current. This was a significant undertaking, and its success was dependent on the commitment and participation of many. The energy and enthusiasm generated was wonderful to experience and the lessons learned will serve us well as we move forward with future celebrations.



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On October 20, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., joyfully welcomed six new members through Affirmation of Baptism and public Profession of Faith. Lorraine Chipperfield, Gladys Githae, Beth Kamau, Sharon Nakabiri, Joselyn Nzayisenga and Paul Tate affirmed their faith and commitment to Christ's church before the congregation. The service, filled with hymns and prayers, celebrated both the growth of the congregation and the new members' dedication to living out their faith within the church community. It was a day of gratitude, reflection and renewed purpose, marking an exciting new chapter for St. Andrew's. Pictured here (left to right) are Sharon Nakabiri, Gladys Githae, Beth Kamau, Joselyn Nzayisenga, Paul Tate, Lorraine Chipperfield, and joining them in the photo are the Rev. Jim MacDonald and elders Isabel Cole (Clerk of Session), Betty Taylor, Alex Szucs, Eleanor White and Marilyn Dean.



Women from Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., took part in a Camp Carin Women's Wellness Weekend in the Muskokas from Sept. 20 to 22.



In August 2024, Renfrew Presbyterian Church in Renfrew, Ont., held a Norman Eady Memorial Fruit Fundraiser in support of the life and ministry of the church. Norman was a faithful member of Renfrew Presbyterian and served as an elder for many years. Nearly three tons of fresh Ontario peaches, pears, plums and nectarines were sold, and a great amount of fellowship was enjoyed!



Dedicated and heartfelt: A group of women from Westminster Presbyterian Church in Smith Falls, Ont., crafted poppies for the Legion's Remembrance Day display, honouring the brave souls who served and sacrificed.



Still smiling after playing through the entire PCC Hymnbook! Frances Balodis, Music Director at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bracebridge, Ont., recently held a Hymn-a-Thon fundraiser, playing on piano the first verse of all the hymns in the PCC hymnbook, beginning at 9:30 a.m. and wrapping up at around 7:30 p.m. The amazing feat raised over \$7,000 for the mission and ministry of Knox. And remarkably, Frances still showed up for church the next day to lead the congregation in worship!



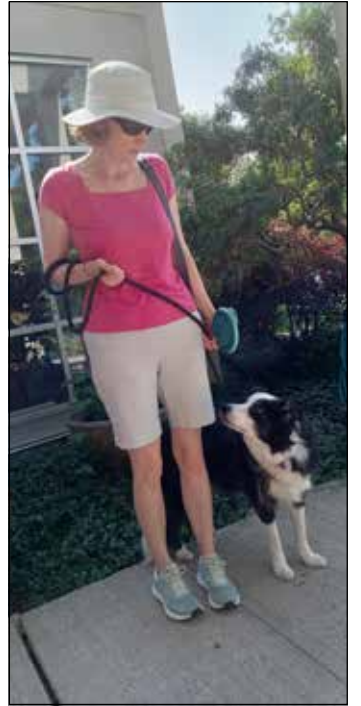
A surprise presentation of a dozen red roses was made in honour of the retirement of Beth Turner, pianist for the past 22-plus years at Knox Presbyterian Church, Centre Road, in Parkhill, Ont. The event was held August 11 at an outdoor church service on the farm of Stewart and Patricia Graham. The Rev. Joanne McLachlan (pictured second from left) led the service of worship. Presenting the roses were elder Ann McLean (second from right), and Dunbar Cox, Clerk of Session and Beth's brother. Beth is pictured at far right.



On Sunday, July 28, parishioner Judith Roy at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., was ordained as an elder of the church. Elders are responsible for the leadership and welfare of the congregation, pastoral care, setting programs, as well as Bible study, missions, fundraising and much more. As an elder, Judith became part of the Session. Pictured here is Judith with the Rev. Lisa Dolson. Congratulations Judith!



In August, at Tisdall Park in Vancouver, B.C., Richmond Presbyterian Church and the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church faced off for their second annual ultimate frisbee challenge. The game was a collaboration to encourage and support intergenerational Presbyterian connections. After, participants gathered for a celebratory barbecue, shared laughter and passed on the trophy to a new home. It is a blessing to have multiple churches working together to live into the call of Psalm 118:24: "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." The next tournament is scheduled for August 23, 2025. Both congregations are so grateful to have siblings in Christ who are ready, willing and able to work at building a Christian community that celebrates the joy of Christ's love in different ways.



On Sunday, August 25, Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville, Ont., held a “Blessing of the Pets” service. The Rev. Carolyn McAvoy of Trafalgar and the Rev. Pat Gushue of Knox Presbyterian Church Sixteen welcomed 11 dogs. The Rev. Gushue blessed the dogs present while the Rev. McAvoy offered a slideshow and blessing of 25 pets who could not attend, as well as a memorial to nine pets who have passed on. The service included references to St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, and his timeless message of peace. Interrelationships with humanity, animals and all of nature were highlighted throughout the service. All pets received certificates.



The local Women’s Centre (Status of Women Central) in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., was the recipient of a donation from St. Matthew’s Presbyterian Church of personal care items. Since dog Ozzy, who is the unofficial greeter at the Women’s Centre, couldn’t take the picture, he accepted the donation from a representative of St. Matthew’s.



The father/son duo of the Rev. Douglas Blaikie (left) and the Rev. Bradford Blaikie attended Saint Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Fredericton, N.B., to help the congregation celebrate their 199th anniversary on June 16. The Rev. Doug Blaikie is Minister Emeritus at Saint Andrew’s and currently serves as Interim Moderator. His son, Brad, is the minister at Summerside Presbyterian Church in Summerside, P.E.I., and was the guest preacher for the anniversary service. The younger Blaikie delivered an awesome sermon, and many were on hand to thank him at the coffee and conversation time held after the service, which was also, coincidentally, Father’s Day.



First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, N.S., hosted a Fun Summer Barbecue and Outdoor Concert on the church grounds for the community. Local fiddler Klorissa Farnsworth introduced the delighted audience to various performances that included musicians, dancers, bagpipers and singers. Freewill offerings were accepted in support of the Pictou West Food Bank.



For over five years, “Hootenanny on the Grass” has taken place on the front lawn of the manse of Knox-Elora Presbyterian Church in Elora, Ont., organized by the No Name Band. On the Sunday evening of the Civic holiday weekend, a wide range of music was enjoyed. Three years ago, the church’s Futures Group added the sale of hot dogs and ice cream to make the evening a true date night. A pass of the hat has raised over \$7,500 for congregational projects. PHOTO CREDIT: BILL LONGSHAW



The "Heaven Scent Singers" from the Niagara area blessed the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church in Magnetawan, Ont., with their lovely voices and moving testimonials of faith. They led the service of worship with their beautifully chosen hymns. For each hymn, they shared the significance and personal meaning of them in their Christian lives. Rest assured, the congregation now gives much more thought to the meaning of the hymns that they sing each week. Pictured here (left to right) are Linda Tamburri (pianist), Karen Laurin, Kim Lavacca, Laurie Bearss and Karen Robertson.



Sometimes, Presbyterians are considered to be rather reserved and traditional, but recently, the Events Committee at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Penticton, B.C., organized a barbecue luncheon along with a Roast of the Rev. Colin Cross and Outreach Minister the Rev. Laura Turnbull, retired United Church minister. With an influx of United Church members following the closure of Penticton United, this was partly a team-building event as well as a time to have fun with the pastors. The ministers are pictured here after their Roast Makeover. It was a fun time for all!



The congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church in Bracebridge, Ont., recently celebrated the long and remarkable music ministry of Paul Gockel, who retired after serving the congregation for 39 years. Paul is best known for his love of Bach, his command of the organ, and his expertise in caring for his 1913 REO car and 1915 Dispro "Dippy" boat. Many current and past choir members joined the congregation in celebrating Paul's ministry with a service that included a video tribute, as well as cake! A painting by local artist John Malnick, featuring a view of downtown Bracebridge, was presented to Paul in thanks for his years of devoted music ministry.



On June 30, Knox Presbyterian Church in Binbrook, Ont., read the Apology of the PCC for its complicity in colonization and the residential school system. To receive the apology, Knox was honoured to have Marvin Laidman attend as a guest, whose mother attended a residential school. The service can be viewed on the KnoxBrinbrook YouTube channel.



Crieff Hills Retreat Centre in Puslinch, Ont., hosted the staff from 541 Eatery & Exchange, a Hamilton faith-based non-profit organization that seeks to create a diverse community of belonging around good food through their pay-it-forward café, as well as youth programming and volunteer opportunities. The day of sabbath included a morning program, nourishing lunch and an afternoon to hike the trails and soak in beautiful green spaces. The event was offered free of charge with help from the Crieff Hills Wellness Fund.



Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., hosts a speaker series on topics of interest to seniors and their families. On Saturday, Sept. 21, elder Judith Roy (pictured above left) welcomed Rachel A. Sachs (right), an Elder Law and Estates lawyer with Sachs Law, as an event speaker. Sachs Law is committed to serving the legal needs of older and aging Ontarians across a variety of practice areas. Rachel is an advocate for seniors, and runs her own practice that focuses on elder law, estate law and real estate law. Her presentation was named, “Estate Matters and Power of Attorney for Seniors: What You Need to Know.” Knox was delighted to host Rachel and was grateful for her extremely informative session.



It's not often that children are among the congregation of St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L. When they are in attendance, they are usually in the company of their father, interim moderator the Rev. David Sturtevant. And more often than not, the kids are called upon to participate in the children's story. Earlier this year, as the Rev. Sturtevant created “high seas” with a tablecloth, he and the children brought Matthew 8:23–27 to life, and the congregation learned how Jesus can bring calm to our lives just as he calmed the great tempest in the sea. The title of the Rev. Sturtevant's sermon that Sunday was “Sea of Troubles.”



On Sunday, July 28, Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., welcomed Christopher Walker from Huron Hospice Bender House as a guest speaker. Walker spoke to the organization's mission, which is to provide quality hospice palliative care in rural communities. Attendees learned that Huron Hospice provides a place where residents can be cared for in a home-like setting in their final months, weeks and days of life. Huron Hospice is jointly funded through the province and community donations, so there is no charge to stay at Huron Hospice. Pictured here is Christopher Walker with the Rev. Lisa Dolson.



North Bramalea Presbyterian Church (NBPC) in Brampton, Ont., held its first ever Blessing of Animals service, in the church basement on Saturday, Oct. 5. Led by the Rev. Noel Ramsey, the service ministered to six pets and their families—Percy and Zeus (dogs) attended in person, while Bubbles (Beta fish), Simba (dog), Slate (cat) and Splat (Budgie), had photo stand-ins. The service included scripture readings from Genesis 2:20–24, prayers and the hymns “All Things Bright and Beautiful” and “Lord Make Me a Channel of Your Peace,” after which the Rev. Ramsey offered individual blessings for each animal. It was a lovely service and blessed occasion for all who attended. Hopefully, it becomes a new tradition that will continue in the following years.



The Thistle Club, the women's group at St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., has spearheaded the church's community outreach program since its inception six years ago. Because St. Matthew's is a small congregation and the Thistle Club an even smaller group, members always look for manageable projects that will benefit the community. In November, the Thistle Club put together gift bags of personal care items for those spending Christmas in the Alzheimer's/dementia unit at the local hospital. Members donated items and more were purchased from club funds.



Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., hosted a “Set Sail” PA Day Camp on Friday, Sept. 27.



The Rev. Dr. Ian Fraser's honorary Doctor of Divinity was celebrated at St. Columba by-the-Lake Presbyterian Church in Pointe-Claire, Que., on June 9, 2024, during a worship service led by the Rev. Lara Scholey. Former ministers Dr. Allen Aiken, Dr. Paul Scott, and former student-minister Dr. Russ Daye returned to St. Columba to participate in the service to help celebrate Ian's achievements. Pictured here (left to right) are Dr. Scott, Dr. Fraser, the Rev. Scholey, Dr. Daye and Dr. Aiken.



In October, the Mission Tea and Talk group at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon, Ont., hosted two guest speakers from Women's Resources, a shelter and support system for women and families in the City of Kawartha Lakes. The speakers, Alisha Taylor, Community Services Manager, and their co-op student, Madison Wright, were presented with 26 teddy bears as well as gifts of personal items for their clients on behalf of the congregation.



July 21 marked the 144th anniversary of Knox Presbyterian Church in Sundridge, Ont. The Rev. Dr. Emily Webb returned to her hometown from her church of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Sarnia, Ont., to guest preach and cut the cake, with help from her parents, elders Norman and Catherine Webb. Piper and Board of Managers chair Ian Eastmure welcomed the community and guests from sister church St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Burks Falls, while testing out the newly completed stone crosswalk that anchors the beautiful lakeside prayer garden in the church's spacious backyard. Sisters Thea and Ryder tested out the prayer garden after enjoying the barbecue bounty served up on the patio.



Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon, Ont., celebrated the retirement of Al Ingram, who served so faithfully as treasurer for over 20 years. The congregation also celebrated the newly elected treasurer, Nadim Kara. There were two cakes in honour of these two fine gentlemen! Pictured with Al are Nadim and John Noble, chairman of the board.



The Thanksgiving service at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Halifax, N.S.



In Newfoundland and Labrador, July 1 is not only Canada Day but it is also Memorial Day, when tribute is paid to members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment who fought and died at Beaumont Hamel in France during the Battle of the Somme in the First World War. For the first time in several years, a representative of St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., was among those who placed a wreath at the local war memorial.



On Sunday, May 12, the Session and congregation of Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (RHPC) in Richmond Hill, Ont., were honoured and humbled during worship to receive a painting of their church that had been gifted by artist and church member Ziba Salehi-Rahni. It is an inspirational work of art lovingly created by Ziba, pictured here with the Rev. Robert Hayashi.



On April 28, 2024, the congregation at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., was pleased to welcome the Rev. Jeanie Lee (pictured centre right) as guest speaker during worship for Mission Awareness Sunday. The Rev. Lee spoke about her past experience in Palestine and Israel. It was a very interesting, timely and informative talk. The Mission and Outreach Committee was able to arrange her visit through International Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The Rev. Lee's missionary work was sponsored through the Presbyterians Sharing program of the national church. The Mission and Outreach Committee was able to contribute \$600 to Presbyterians Sharing through a pancake breakfast fundraiser in support of the Rev. Lee's visit.



The congregation of First Presbyterian Church, North Pelham, near Fenwick, Ont., celebrated their 196th anniversary as a congregation on October 20, 2024. Pictured here with the anniversary cake is the Rev. Jacob Lee and guest minister the Rev. Pearl Vasarhelyi.



On Sept. 22, the 40th anniversary service was held at Petawawa Presbyterian Church in Petawawa, Ont. Forty years ago, the congregation built the church with the assistance of their first minister, the Rev. Bruce Kemp (far right). The Rev. Kemp, along with his spouse, Diana, is pictured here cutting cakes with the Rev. James Kim, current minister, and his wife, Lynn.



On Sept. 8, North Bramalea Presbyterian Church (NBPC) in Brampton, Ont., welcomed folks back to regular church services with its annual Fall Roundup and Barbecue service. A well-established tradition at NBPC, it's held the first Sunday after Labour Day, at which the minister and Session host a special service and barbecue lunch to welcome all attendees back after summer vacations. This year was extra-special as it was the first opportunity for the Rev. Noel Ramsey (inducted April 21, 2024) and his family to participate.



A group of women from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Stirling, Ont., meets twice a month to create, collect and sort items for multiple charities. Some of the materials provided include baby blankets and sweater sets, as well as ponchos, hats and children's sweaters. Some items are shipped to Kenya for those in most need, while others go to Nunavut in northern Canada. Pictured here are women in Kenya wearing the ponchos. The women's group also sends personal care items, clothing, crochet and sewing supplies, and craft tools. Other initiatives include securing pouches and booties for dialysis patients, and donating shawls, hats and mittens for kids and shut-in people. There are 25 dedicated women who take part in these activities and their efforts are gratefully received. May God continue to bless the group's work!



The Annual Lasagna Dinner at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ancaster, Ont., was held in June to help raise funds for the Ancaster Community Services Food Bank. And on July 16, members of the fundraising team presented a cheque to Kaylee Norwood, Ancaster Community Services Executive Director. Pictured here (left to right) are Kaylee Norwood, Jim Robb, Diane Robb, Barbara Raphael, and Randy Raphael.

From the congregation at Point Edward Presbyterian Church in Sarnia, Ont., congratulations and best wishes go out to Gordon and Cora Black, who celebrated 73 years of marriage on August 4, 2024. The couple was married in St. George's Presbyterian Church in London, Ont. And happy birthday goes out to Alice Stevenson, who celebrated her 90th birthday in August—a wonderful milestone.

Knox Presbyterian Church in Weyburn, Sask., holds its annual Garage Sale fundraiser every autumn, and this year's event took place Sept. 26–27. Items are cleaned, then organized into different categories: kitchen, small appliances, tools, bedding, electronics, books, furniture, toys, etc. There's always a strong turnout. Items aren't priced; instead, a sign is posted saying, "All Reasonable Offers Accepted." This year's event raised approximately \$3,000 to replenish funds used on a costly hall roof project. The congregation would not have been able to hold this fundraiser without generous donations and volunteers from the community who helped with the event, including Gourley and Mehler from the local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who brought their strength and fun-loving attitudes. Thank you!



The Equity and Inclusion Team recently led the congregation at Erindale Presbyterian Church in Mississauga, Ont., in learning more about our Indigenous siblings through hearing the Creation Story of Sky Woman Falling, recognizing Orange Shirt Day and, on Orange Shirt Day, honouring those affected by residential schools in Canada.



Pictured above are members of the "band" at St. David's Presbyterian Church in Campbellville, Ont. Doug, piano, studied music at Western University and received an M.Div. from McMaster; Mike, violin, studied astrophysics at Waterloo University and now works at the Canadian Space Agency; Drew, bass, is a wilderness guide. Come for the music! For details on how to join the online service, email stdavidssecretary@gmail.com.



The congregations of Rockway Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church, North Pelham, near Fenwick, Ont., hosted Harvest Table this Thanksgiving Sunday, with all donations being given to Open Arms Mission in Welland. As well, Janice Wiley was installed as a new elder on October 13.



The scaffolding recently came down at Knox Presbyterian Church in Stratford, Ont., as a two-year renovation project to restore the stained-glass windows was completed. For many years, the windows have been dirty and damaged. Despite running into several issues as the work progressed, the beautiful old windows are now available for all to see.



On September 29, the congregation of New St. James Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., honoured Torin Chiles on his 20th anniversary as the director of music.

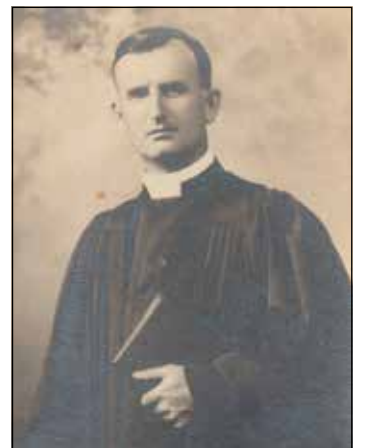


The Rev. Don Corbett and his wife, Joy, celebrated the 65th anniversary of Don's ordination. The Rev. Corbett is a Baptist minister who served the last 20 years as the Pastoral Care Minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Orillia, Ont.



In October, Crieff Hills Retreat Centre's executive director Kristine O'Brien was warmly welcomed by the Presbytery of West Toronto, where she shared photos and stories of her work at Crieff—and offered farm-fresh eggs to the moderator! West Toronto sets a beautiful example by investing not only in the mission of Crieff Hills but in a long list of other projects and organizations that do good work in the world. Pictured with Kristine is Young Cho, moderator, and Lance Odland, clerk.

On Sunday, Sept. 15, the church Session at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., was delighted to welcome three new members—Susan Hayashi (membership transfer), Ana Osborne (membership transfer) and Kurlie Ramasra (professing member)—along with two returning members, Winston Chan and Margaret Chan. Everyone enjoyed a celebratory cake during fellowship time.



On Monday, Sept. 23, Knox College in Toronto, Ont., through the Ministry Forum, hosted its Charles H. MacDonald (pictured above, far right, circa 1924) Memorial Lecture at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Toronto. This lectureship, established in 1953 by the MacDonald family, has been a highlight in the college's life for decades. This year's lecture was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser (second from right), accompanied by the Tom Reynolds Trio, and was titled "Thinking in Jazz about Church Leadership." As an added treat, the lecture was followed by an evening concert where a jazz suite, commissioned by Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Burnaby, B.C., and paid for by Knox College, was premiered.



On Sept. 15, Knox Presbyterian Church in Meaford, Ont., had double the reason to celebrate—170 years as a congregation and 10 years with the Rev. Anne-Marie Jones! PHOTO CREDIT: SARAH COX



It was a joyful beginning to November as three new elders were ordained at the Gathering Place in Port Colborne, Ont. Elder Emeritus Don MacDonald welcomed Rick Covello, Georgia Smith and Larry Fisher, with the Rev. Adam Bartha leading the service.



Orange Shirt Day (the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation) was recognized on Sunday, Sept. 29, at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.



Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (RHPC) in Richmond Hill, Ont., was once again pleased to participate in Richmond Hill Doors Open on Saturday, May 11, 2024. This year, RHPC hosted the Art Studio exhibit for three RHPC artists: Roger Potts, Ziba Salehi-Rahni and Narenhua. Community attendance was very good, and visitors were able to explore all areas of the church (e.g., sanctuary, Casavant pipe organ, heritage cemetery, Sunday school room, and William Wallace Memorial Hall for the art studio). One of the dignitaries in attendance was Simon Cui (top right), Richmond Hill Councillor for Ward 4, pictured with the Rev. Robert Hayashi.



Giving Thanks for the Rev. Lisa Dolson



The Rev. Lisa Dolson (right) and flautist Jan Searle, who performed at the Rev. Dolson's final service at Knox.

By Teresa Steel, Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont.

Sunday, August 25, was bitter-sweet for the congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont.

"With heavy hearts we bid goodbye to the Rev. Lisa Dolson, as her final service at the 'little church with the great big heart' took place on Sunday," said Teresa Steel. "Lisa is moving on to her next calling to share her gifts, and although we are very happy for her

and this next leg of her journey, we are sad to see her go."

The Rev. Dolson began her work as Minister of Word and Sacrament at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bayfield, Ont., on Sept. 2, 2018. Her formal induction took place on Sept. 9 of that same year, with members of the Presbytery of Huron Perth and the Knox congregation. Her ability to show appreciation and enjoyment in spending quality time with others fostered a desire to connect with people in meaningful ways.



The Rev. Lisa Dolson joined members of the Knox Presbyterian Church family for a group photo earlier in the month. The minister's last Sunday at Knox Church was August 25. PHOTO CREDIT: MELODY FALCONER-POUNDER

"Rev. Lisa's positive attitude, pragmatic way and sunny smile is what makes her so special, and it's these qualities that we will miss most of all. Thank you, Rev. Lisa, for your love and friendship. Your legacy will live on in our hearts. May God go with you," said Teresa.

To mark this special occasion,

the congregation welcomed Jan Searle to Sunday's service. Jan is a professional flautist and she shared her musical gifts during the 11 a.m. service. She has been teaching flute since 1967, and held Principal Flute positions in operas, ballets, orchestras, symphonies and musical theatre, and has performed for movies

and television. Jan has performed in many notable venues, including the Kennedy Centre and the Stratford Theatre. The congregation extends many thanks to her for sharing her gift of music at the service, and we wish all the best to the Rev. Lisa Dolson as she moves on to the next phase of her life.

Recognizing the Rev. Susan V. Clarke

By Dr. Alan Israel, elder, Knox Presbyterian Church in Elora, Ont.

On Monday, August 19, the congregation of Knox-Elora Presbyterian Church in Elora, Ont., gathered to celebrate and honour a very special person in our community and to recognize the incredible journey and impactful work of our retiring minister, the Rev. Susan V. Clarke.

We weren't just saying goodbye to a minister, we were celebrating the legacy of a spiritual leader who has touched countless lives with wisdom, compassion and unwavering faith. The Rev. Clarke came to us from the Ottawa area, where her early ministry served St. Andrew's Kars Presbyterian Church for 11 years. She then dedicated the last nine years to Knox-Elora and St. Andrew's-Alma, guiding us with a steady hand and a heart full of love.

Under her leadership, our congregations have remained grounded, steadfast and resilient to a changed world. The years of the Covid lockdown presented new and unfamiliar challenges. For the first time, Knox-Elora entered into the world of online

ministry. With digital technology, copies of church services and events were made available to those who were isolated. She faithfully prepared the monthly newsletter as another means of informing our members and assuring congregational cohesion at both churches. It was during her term that Knox-Elora shouldered the responsibility of both steeple repair and a new roof.

Susan was always there, whether she was leading a service, visiting the sick, or offering a kind word of encouragement to anyone in need. But it wasn't just about the big moments—Susan has been present in the everyday details, ensuring that every person who walked through our doors felt welcome, seen and valued. Her sermons inspired us, challenged us, and reminded us of the power of faith and the importance of kindness in our lives.

Susan has a unique ability to connect with people of all ages, creating a sense of community that is truly special. Beyond the walls of our churches, Susan has been a beacon of light in the wider community. She was Padre at the Elora Legion. She invited our local bookshop to run a story-

time using Knox-Elora's fellowship hall. She has had us partner with local cafés for free community coffee. The introduction of the "Knox Box" at the church entrance included food items as a charitable effort. She always advocated for the less fortunate, reminding us that our faith is not just something we practice on Sundays, but something we live every day.

Susan's passion for the wider church community gave rise to her supporting Knox Palmerston while they were without a minister. She also served our Waterloo-Wellington Presbytery as moderator from Jan. 2017 through to Sept. 2018.

From the congregations of both churches, we collectively extend our thanks to Susan's husband, Malcolm, for his participation at both churches, as well as for sharing Susan with us for these nine incredible years.

As Susan embarks on this well-deserved retirement, we know that her influence will continue to be felt, both here in our churches and beyond. While we will miss her presence, we are so grateful for the strong foundation she has laid and the impact



The Rev. Susan Clarke and husband, Malcolm, at Susan's retirement on August 19. PHOTO CREDIT: L. FOX

she has made.

We celebrate the dedication, service and countless contributions of the Rev. Clark. We give thanks for the love she has

shared with us, and we wish her and Malcolm all the best in the next chapter of their lives. Susan is a true servant of God, leader, and dear friend to us all.

A New Chapter at Grace PC, Calgary



The Rev. Dr. Chris Joiner.

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

Grace Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alta., is filled with gratitude and hope as we reflect on the arrival and ministry of our new lead minister, the Rev. Dr. Chris Joiner. The journey to this moment has been long but has brought us to a place of renewed energy and vision for the future.

The Rev. Joiner and his wife, Kim, joined our church family in June 2024, following a five-year search for the right person to lead the congregation at Grace Presbyterian Church. The induction ser-

vice held on June 23 was a profound moment of celebration and anticipation, marking the beginning of this new chapter in our church's life. Since then, the Rev. Joiner has already made a significant impact, bringing his deep faith, thoughtful leadership, and compassionate spirit to our congregation.

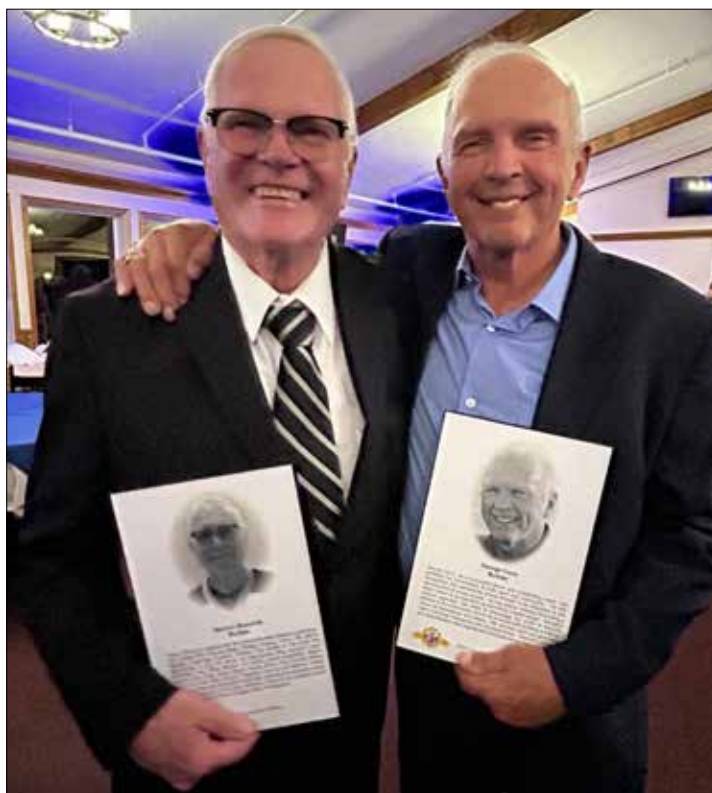
In the months since the induction service, we are reminded of the many prayers, hopes and efforts that brought us to this point. The process of finding a new minister was a time of reflection and growth, and we are deeply grateful for the dedication of those who guided us through it, notably the Rev. Dr. Jean Morris, our interim

moderator.

As we move forward, we do so with a renewed sense of community and purpose. The journey with the Rev. Joiner has only just begun, and we are filled with excitement and hope for how his ministry will continue to shape and inspire the congregation in the future.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Rev. Joiner and Kim for their commitment to our church, and we look forward to the continued blessings that their presence will bring. As we step into this new year, let us do so with joy, gratitude and a shared vision for the future of Grace Presbyterian Church.

Springwater Sports Hall of Fame Inductees



Vern Beacock and George Conn.

By Thomas Mason, Knox Flos Presbyterian Church in Elmvale, Ont.

Knox Flos Presbyterian Church in Elmvale, Ont., is extremely proud of the induction into the Springwater Sports Hall of Fame of two of our members in the "Builders" category.

Vern Beacock (left) was inducted for his dedication to sledge hockey in our community and beyond, where members of the Elmvale Bears have gone on to represent Team Canada. Through Vern's efforts, access to team sports on the ice was made avail-

able to so many.

George Conn was inducted for his incredible achievements as a hockey coach, winning the Earl Vollick Memorial Trophy twice and leading our local junior team to many provincial championships. Both members of Knox Flos must be commended for their faithful service and commitment to the youth of our community and to our church.

Both Vern and George have made a huge impact in the lives of so many people for so many years. Well done and thank you, Vern and George!



PULPIT VACANCY

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN, PEMBROKE, ONT.

First Presbyterian Church in beautiful downtown Pembroke, Ont., is seeking a half-time minister or half-time stated supply minister. If you are a Spirit-filled, Christ-centred minister who is willing to work alongside others within the church to further its outreach ministry to the community, then we would love to hear from you!

Please prayerfully consider ministry in Pembroke!
Contact Interim Moderator the Rev. David McFarlane at davemcfarlane534@gmail.com



PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

That's How the Light Gets In



Women in Afghanistan receive cash assistance to enable them to buy food.



In Yemen, food assistance provided through ecumenical partners is helping to ensure families meet their nutritional needs. PHOTO CREDIT: ADRA YEMEN

By *Guy Smaghe*,
PWS&D Director

The work of providing relief in times of disasters is challenging, as the darkness seems to become increasingly dense in places affected by conflict, where entire populations are subject to indiscriminate attacks. At times this might look like genocide—such as in Gaza or in Sudan—or like femicide in Afghanistan.

Looking back at the year that has passed is difficult. Every day I hope to see more peace and justice, but I am informed through my news channels that more and more people are dying because of the political ambitions of a hand-

ful of people. Whether in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan or Afghanistan, a very small number of people are directly responsible for the mass murder of civilians, including children. In Afghanistan, women's rights have been all but eroded, despite having these rights in the past. It seems women barely have the right to live anymore. The world watches as international humanitarian laws and conventions are trampled.

As I write these lines, Israel has begun ground attacks on Lebanon and is launching missiles at Beirut, even as it prepares to retaliate to strikes from Iran. In Gaza, the situation has gone from bad to worse, reaching such levels of calamity that one can barely understand how such abuse can happen in this day and age.

It's easy to feel powerless in the face of such abuses of power at the expense of fellow human beings, all created in God's image and deserving of peace and abundance. That feeling of powerlessness cannot take over, however, and we must seek the light in the darkness. As Leonard Cohen said, "There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in." For PWS&D, that crack is opened by our partnerships and ecumenical alliances.

I think of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, a member of the ACT Alliance, who have been assisting Palestinians

in Gaza for many years prior to the recent aggression by Israel. They were already there, positioned to assist those who were displaced and hurt by the bombings. They faithfully offer health services in the most difficult of circumstances. Through their mental health programs, they continue to help children find joy amid horror.

I think of women in Afghanistan who face extreme hunger. Unable to feed their children, they watch them die. And I think of our partner who found ways to negotiate with the Taliban so that they can provide life-saving food assistance during the harshest winter months. I am grateful for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank that is helping us to respond with the support of the Canadian government.

For each one of the people who are reached in places like Gaza or Afghanistan, our assistance is a crack that lets light into their lives.

As we look ahead to the coming year, it is difficult to predict where the world will go. Who will be the next victims?

One thing that we know is that every effort will be made by agencies like PWS&D and its ecumenical partners and alliances to find the cracks through which we can respond and bring light into the dark realities experienced by so many. The light that we can bring becomes brighter with your support—in prayers and in donations and legacy gifts.

The Refugee Sponsorship Process

By *Biniam Goitom*, PWS&D Refugee Sponsorship, and *Karen Bokma*, PWS&D Communications

Many Presbyterian groups and congregations have—and continue to show—love for their neighbour by sponsoring refugees. If sponsorship is something you're interested in learning more about or getting your congregation involved in, keep reading for more about how the process works.

Step 1: getting started

The church or sponsoring group reaches out to PWS&D to begin the process and forms a Refugee Sponsorship Committee to help steer the process. Each year in January, PWS&D initiates the process of working with sponsorship groups, which includes iden-

tifying the type of sponsorship they want to undertake (named or referred by the government). PWS&D works with the church or sponsoring group to ensure all finances are in order to support the refugees. This involves budgeting, providing proof of sponsorship funds, and fundraising. The Refugee Sponsorship Committee prepares a thorough settlement plan and completes all paperwork necessary.

Step 2: application

The Refugee Sponsorship Committee works with PWS&D to prepare and submit the sponsorship application to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). IRCC sends the application to the Canadian visa office overseas.

Step 3: visa office processing

This step takes place primarily in the regional Canadian visa office overseas. This is a time for patience as an interview will take place, followed by medical and background checks for the refugee. The waiting period for this step can be lengthy, up to three years. The waiting period can be much shorter for government-referred refugee cases, and the cost is also lower, as costs are split between the government and the sponsoring group.

Step 4: arrival

After receiving the Notice of Arrival from IRCC, the Refugee Sponsorship Committee prepares for the arrival of the refugee. This includes revising the

budget, reviewing the settlement plan and ensuring readiness. It's finally time to meet each other! The church or sponsoring group meets the newcomer at the airport and provides transportation to the community of resettlement.

Step 5: settlement

The church or sponsoring group provides orientation and connects newcomers to settlement agencies for services such as English as a Second Language education, employment services, applying for identification and health care, and more as needed. They fund monthly and start-up costs for newcomers. Sponsors build relationships with the new arrivals and follow up to help address questions and provide general support. Sponsors support the



A sponsored family arrives at Ottawa airport in 2023.

independence and integration of the newcomers and help them to become more at home in Canada.

Are you interested in using this resource in your congregation? Visit WeRespond.ca/get-involved/refugee-sponsorship for resources and information about how you can be involved.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Supporters Join the Journey for Hope



Together in Motion and Song team members Dorothy Reimer and Laura Kavanagh lead their community in singing during the first of two fundraising events for Journey for Hope in Victoria, B.C.

By Emma Clarke,
PWS&D Communications

Journey for Hope, a national fundraiser for PWS&D's food security work, took place this September as teams from Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario "stepped up" their support. To

date, over \$28,000 was raised by the 11 teams participating, thanks to generous donations from friends, family and others in their communities.

For each team, the annual event took on its own unique character, best suited to the community. Whether walking, biking or doing another activity, all participants had one thing in common: a determination to make a difference in the lives of people for whom reliable access to food is a challenge.

While the official date for Journey for Hope was September 28, teams were creative and held the event in the way that worked best for them. In Victoria, B.C., the event took place over two Saturdays. On the first day of their event, volunteers from Together in Motion and Song stood with hymnals in hand, leading their community in song and sharing inspiring stories about the work of PWS&D. Then, on September 28, this team, which is made up of four congregations, participated

with others throughout the country by walking and cycling.

"I know PWS&D as an organization," said the Rev. Laura Kavanagh, who helped coordinate the Victoria Journey for Hope. "I have complete trust in it and am happy to share it within church circles and widely within the world."

In Elmira, Ont., cyclists rode over 20 kilometres for the cause, taking in the beautiful sights. Each year, the number of participants and the distance travelled by this team grows. All are excited to have exceeded their fundraising goal of \$3,000.

In Nanaimo, B.C., the event takes place on a Sunday, so that children in the congregation can do their part as they ride around the parking lot following the morning service, before enjoying refreshments with the rest of their community.

Reaching out beyond the church community, Journey for Hope is a practical way for people to mobilize those around them to do

something about the devastation they hear about around the world.

"People are often looking for what they can do to make an impact," reflects Laura. "Journey for Hope is one of those opportunities where I feel really comfortable asking beyond the congregation."

For many, the partnership model is an additional draw to participate in Journey for Hope. Femmy Birks, from Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, Ont.,

commented about her team, a collaboration of people from two area churches: "It has been great to be able to partner with St. Andrew's [in Kitchener, Ont.]."

Laura reflected, too: "I think it's nice to know that we're all working towards one thing." Given the famine conditions being experienced in places like Sudan, Yemen and Afghanistan, every effort made by Journey for Hope fundraisers is lifesaving.



Beautiful asters and other wildlife greeted the team from Elmira, Ont., midway through their 21-kilometre ride.

Sudan Hunger Crisis

By Stephanie Chunoo
PWS&D Communications

Since mid-2023, violent clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan have resulted in more than half the population—25.6 million people—facing acute hunger and nearly five million people on the brink of famine. The violence has forced people to flee their homes, leading to the world's largest internal displacement crisis. It is estimated that 7.9 million people

have been displaced inside Sudan, and more than two million have taken refuge in neighbouring countries.

Prior to this conflict, Sudan had already been facing its worst humanitarian crisis in recent history. Existing localized conflict, natural disasters, disease outbreaks, hunger and economic degradation had already threatened the lives and futures of millions of children. In the past year alone, the number of people needing humanitarian support has increased by 58 percent.

This is exacerbated by Sudan's increasingly volatile security situation, which is now one of the most dangerous and complex environments for delivering humanitarian aid.

The situation in Sudan is dire, and yet, this devastating situation continues to be underreported.

Saving lives

PWS&D is responding to the crisis in Sudan through Canadian Foodgrains Bank member Development & Peace-Caritas Canada and their local partner Trócaire.

To prevent malnutrition and save lives, Trócaire is providing ready-to-use therapeutic food, supplementary food, therapeutic milk and oral rehydration solutions to over 8,700 people at 15 health centres in the Nuba Mountains, an area that has recently become a fairly secure haven. The project is especially focusing on treating children and pregnant and lactating women.

In addition, through the ACT Alliance, internally displaced people, refugees and host communities will be provided with assistance, including: water, sanitation



Kalo, who is severely malnourished, is assessed by a nurse at a Trócaire-supported nutrition clinic. PHOTO CREDIT: TRÓCAIRE.

and hygiene services; safeguarding, protection and counselling in response to gender-based violence; and cash assistance.

Need is immense

The work that PWS&D is supporting is vital. However, the need is immense—the United Nations reports that their Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan for 2024 is nearly 59 percent underfunded.

The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has pointed out that ongoing conflicts in places like Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Syria and Sudan are receiving only a fraction of the

attention compared to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

PWS&D understands the importance of advocating for the people of Sudan. Along with other Canadian international relief and development organizations, PWS&D signed on to a joint statement directed at the Government of Canada. The statement urged the government to "demonstrate strong political leadership by increasing diplomatic engagement to secure a ceasefire" and calling for "humanitarian access...to secure the delivery of humanitarian goods and services necessary to alleviate the suffering of Sudanese civilians."



Caregivers of children with malnutrition line up to receive nutrition services at a Trócaire-supported clinic in Sudan. PHOTO CREDIT: TRÓCAIRE.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

One Year Later, Gaza Response Continues

By Karen Bokma,
PWS&D Communications

In the year since the start of the current war in Gaza, tens of thousands have been killed or injured. Around 86% of the Gaza Strip has come under evacuation orders since October 7, 2023. This population movement has meant overcrowding, lack of proper shelter, poor water, and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions, all of which have had grave impact on public health. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that only 16 out of 36 hospitals in Gaza are partially functioning,

and just 44% of primary health-care facilities are operational.

Humanitarian efforts are hindered by ongoing challenges, including limited access and mobility, high costs for goods and challenges in moving them, and a difficult security context with limited electricity and fuel.

Despite these challenges, PWS&D partners, including DSPR (the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, part of the Near East Council of Churches) and Catholic Relief Services (through Canadian Foodgrains Bank), continue to provide food, health care and psychological assistance to

as many people as possible.

Primary health care

Prior to increased fighting, DSPR was able to provide primary health and dental care in their Rafah clinic. Military operations in the area meant the focus of the work shifted to mobile clinic services. Thousands of patients have received pre- and post-natal care, well-baby services, malnutrition care, and other health screenings. Dignity and hygiene kits are distributed through the mobile clinics. DSPR has also established clinics in north Gaza and provided aid there.

Emergency food aid

In partnership with local churches in northern Gaza, DSPR carries out its food distribution program to people seeking refuge. DSPR has consistently ensured that those sheltering in churches receive

necessary food supplies. The distribution of ready-to-eat meals has also been part of their ongoing food response.

PWS&D is also supporting Catholic Relief Services, through Canadian Foodgrains Bank, to provide 12 months of emergency food to 1,485 internally displaced families in southern Gaza. Families received an initial distribution of ready-to-eat food, with subsequent distributions of in-kind food assistance.

Mental health support

Despite logistical and security challenges, helping to provide children with normal activities and experiences is key to ensuring good mental health outcomes. Central to DSPR's ongoing mental health initiatives are "fun days" for kids impacted by the ongoing conflict. DSPR supports children and mothers through small group and

large play sessions, in addition to psychological first aid care. Mental health staff work with schools and shelters to support children to restore some normalcy, provide hope and optimism through psychological and recreational support. They connect parents and children through these activities, and use art and play-based activities to provide relief.

Further support is offered to parents to help them manage stress, learn proactive psychological and emotional relief activities, and teach them techniques to support themselves and their children.

The need in Gaza remains great. We continue to pray for a peaceful end to the conflict and for people in Gaza to begin to recover and rebuild. Support PWS&D's ongoing response by visiting WeRespond.ca/donate-to-pwsd.



Maternal and child health services are being provided to as many as possible near Rafah. PHOTO CREDIT: DSPR



Through play-based and creative activities, mental health staff and volunteers are working to help provide psychological relief. PHOTO CREDIT: MAHMOD ELBARAGETHI/DSPR.

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Canadian Friends of Sabeel “Authentic Christian Pilgrimage” Document

By the Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon,
Principal Emerita at Knox College
in Toronto, Ont., and member of the
Canadian Friends of Sabeel Board.

Pilgrims from all parts of the world for over 2,000 years have flocked to visit Christian holy sites in what, until 1948, was known as Palestine. Not surprisingly, the genocide in Gaza and the increasing Palestinian death toll in the West Bank have led to a significant decline in the number of pilgrims and their encounter with the indigenous Palestinian people. (Note that this does not take into consideration the considerable reduction in revenues from pilgrims/tourists for both economies. *Haaretz*, an Israeli newspaper, records that tourism has dropped 76% since October 7, 2023.)

For weeks after October 7, 2023, Israel blocked all access into or out of the West Bank. The infrastructure of towns such as Jenin and Tulkarem has been decimated by the Israeli army. Nablus and Hebron, as well as Bethlehem, Ramallah and East Jerusalem, are experiencing almost daily increased military incursions. Whole villages have been displaced and their Palestinian inhabitants scattered. When the PCC group visited Bethlehem and East Jerusalem in May 2024, we were the only international group staying in local hotels.

The violence of 2023–2024 and its restrictions on all aspects of Palestinian life, including livelihoods dependent on tourism, is nevertheless not new. For decades, Israel has had an intensive worldwide advertising campaign promoting Christian pilgrimages to Israel through Israeli tour companies. Christian clergy have been invited on familiarization tours at minimal cost where they have experienced the best of Israeli hotels and restaurants. In addition, since the occupation of the West Bank, Israel had been undermining Palestinian tourism slowly and deliberately by refusing permits to Palestinian tour guides to operate in Jerusalem, permitting Israeli buses to go to the West Bank by avoiding checkpoints and using illegal settler-only roads. Only Israeli tour guides are hired. Tourists typically will make a two-hour visit to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, reboard the bus and return to Israel, meaning that no Palestinian hotels or restaurants are used. Palestinian markets are avoided.



A section of the wall that separates Palestine and Israel.

The Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) is a Palestinian NGO established in 1995 that specializes in tours and pilgrimages and includes an in-depth examination of the history, culture and politics of the Holy Land. It has long recognized the Israeli intention to erase or disassociate Palestinian life and history from tourism. This group holds as central “the creation of economic opportunities for the local community, positive cultural exchange between host and guest through one-on-one interaction, the environment and political/historical education.” ATG has worked tirelessly to end exploitative mass tourism and to adopt practices that positively affect the host population. To that end, the group has developed *Theology of Pilgrimage: Listening to the Living Stones* (Beit Sahour, 2016), as well as a Code of Conduct for tourism in the Holy Land (see atg.ps/study-center/publications).

In a June 2017 report, the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP)—set out the challenges to Palestinian tourism and

recommended solutions. Among several recommendations, the primary one listed adheres with recent UN General Assembly resolutions; that is, ending the occupation as the key to ending all restrictions that damage Palestinian tourism, allowing Palestine to control its own borders and build an airport. (The full report can be found at undp.org.)

Recognizing the importance of intentional pilgrimages for the existence of the Palestinian community, its culture, history and economy, Canadian Friends of Sabeel (CFOS) initiated a project with the goal of transforming the way in which Christians visit and experience the Holy Land. It became clearer as we researched this project that most Christian pilgrims hear only the interpretations of tour guides, all of whom must be licenced by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and whose licence can be revoked if they speak about the presence of the indigenous Palestinian people. The result is that tourists hear little or nothing about the oppression and violence of the Israeli occupation, with its

countless checkpoints controlling every aspect of Palestinian life.

Perhaps an anecdote helps us to understand the extent to which Israeli tours can erase even something so prominently a part of the occupation as the 708 km-long apartheid wall snaking around most of Palestine. One individual who had recently returned from an Israeli-sponsored tour of the Holy Land was asked how he experienced the apartheid wall. His response was, “What wall?”

In 2019, CFOS undertook a consultation with 20 Palestinian organizations that have firsthand experi-

ence with the Palestinian Christian community, on alternative tourism and pilgrimage, and are committed to a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis in the Holy Land. The resulting CFOS document defines what a pilgrimage is intended to be and sets out seven principles to guide Christian groups planning a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A pilgrimage that incorporates these principles is named by CFOS as “an authentic Christian pilgrimage.” Download *Authentic Christian Pilgrimage: A Resource from Canadian Friends of Sabeel* at presbyterian.ca/authentic-christian-pilgrimage.

Canadian Friends of Sabeel is a national ecumenical response to the call of Palestinian Christians for solidarity. Through education and engagement, CFOS supports the struggle for equality, justice, freedom and human rights of Palestinians living under apartheid and the illegal Israeli military occupation. CFOS, with its partners around the world, works non-violently for a just and durable peace for Palestinians and Israelis. Visit friendsofsabeel.ca to learn more.



**CANADIAN FRIENDS
OF SABELL**

Global Ecumenical Learning Community Experience

By Jocelyn Chung, St. Timothy Presbyterian Church in Etobicoke, Ont.

A *Global Ecumenical Learning Community*, jointly hosted by The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Church of Canada, gathered from June 29 to July 3 at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont. This was an opportunity for four Canadian young adults from PCC and UCC congregations to personally connect with young adults from three partner denominations in Asia. Two participants from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) and two from the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ) were guests of the PCC. Four participants from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea were guests of the UCC. The following reflection is written by Jocelyn Chung, a PCC young adult participant.

In late June/early July, I spent nine days at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont. Although I had no idea what I was getting myself into, it was an invaluable experience of learning, forming community, and sharing wisdom across different cultures, and I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to have gone through it.

It was an overwhelming meeting with all the global partners and having to overcome cultural and

language barriers, and even more so against the daunting backdrop of knowing that we had four days to get to know each other, and to jointly develop a workshop to be delivered at the PCC/UCC Audacious Hope conference.

We were definitely on a time crunch throughout the event, especially among other commitments that our group had; however, one thing that we always kept at the centre of our time together was worship. Each of us was responsible for leading a different worship for our group, with the intention of learning how other cultures and denominations do worship—this may have been one of my favourite parts of my time there. I learned about Taizé worship, sang famous children’s songs in the United Church tradition, and danced to Taiwanese worship music.

Whenever we weren’t worshipping or on hikes or other mini-trips, we were in Alpie’s Trough (our worship space that eventually became our home), trying to find topics that all denominations could relate to. This process was incredibly difficult, especially with a pretty extreme communication barrier between most of us. However, we finally established that two issues that were universally experienced were Indigenous rights and declining YAYA (youth and young adults) in the

church—these topics ended up being the focus of our workshop.

Over the next couple of days, our attention was on our workshop—how we were going to deliver it, what we wanted to say, and how each topic relates to each of our experiences. Through this process, I was blessed with an incredibly eye-opening experience of listening to what my global friends had to say. The Canadians in the group intentionally took a step back to lift up the voices of our international friends, and thanks to this we learned about what Indigenous rights mean in the Taiwanese context, and some potential reasons why we’ve noticed a decline in young people in each of our denominations.

Thankfully, we came through and ended up delivering a very successful workshop that all of us



Photos from the Global Ecumenical Learning Community.

were sincerely proud of. We spent the rest of our time as participants in Audacious Hope and spending as much time together as we could before everyone had to fly back to their respective homes.

If there’s one thing my nine days with the Global Ecumenical Learning Community taught me, it’s that even though everyone came from vastly different backgrounds, it was not difficult at all to find common ground. I experienced firsthand how universal human issues are, as well as how differently they manifest in different contexts, and this gave me such a good opportunity to learn from people. It’s

helped me become more globally aware and also more understanding of others. I learned that humans, no matter where they are, tend to experience similar struggles and that there is more common ground among people than we might think. There’s no one way of doing worship that is inherently better than another, just like there is no one way to experience a certain struggle that is more valid than another. Every new person we meet (internationally or otherwise) presents to us a new opportunity to learn something, and to find shared experiences that unite us.



Remarkable Moments: The PCC and Taiwan



The picture on the left, from 1956, shows the delivery of Christmas cards from The Presbyterian Church in Canada to the Mustard Seed Office in Taipei, Taiwan. It was an initiative started by Lillian Dickson to spread scripture and Christmas cheer. The relationship between the PCC and Taiwan continues as the PCC participates in youth exchanges like the “I Love Taiwan” event (see page 36), and the work of PCC mission staff the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean, who works in Bible translation in Taiwan. In demonstration of this strong relationship, during Covid, Taiwan remembered the PCC by sending masks when Canada had few and Taiwan had an abundance.

Reflecting on “I Love Taiwan” Experience

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has a longstanding relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). Each year, the PCT hosts a dynamic program called “I Love Taiwan,” which attracts youth from all over the world who share in the PCT’s youth and children’s ministry and learn about the unique culture of Taiwan. The following reflections are from Ty Coulter of Knox Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont., and Emily Delaney of Lakeview Presbyterian Church in Thunder Bay, Ont. Ty and Emily took part in the experience this past summer with support from the PCC.

Welcome and Hospitality

By Ty Coulter, Knox Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, Ont.

Going into the trip, I didn’t know what to expect. We’d been able to speak to the people who participated last year, but there were still so many unanswered questions about what the next two weeks would look like. I was lucky enough to be able to travel to Guatemala with The Presbyterian Church in Canada in 2019, but

knew that this trip would be much different than anything else I’d experienced. I travelled to Taiwan with the other participant from Canada, Emily, whom I met for the first time at the Toronto airport on the way to Taiwan.

We started the trip with all the other “I Love Taiwan” members in Taipei. We spent two days doing orientation exercises and getting to know everyone from the other countries. There were participants from Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, India and Taiwan. We also learned about which communities and churches we would be joining for the next few weeks. I was hosted by Lynn and her family in their house.

After two days together in Taipei, we split up into our smaller groups and went our separate ways, with groups going to various cities and communities across Taiwan. I was hosted by the Shihlin church, based in Taipei, and in a group including Fela from India, Mai from Japan, Ming Su from South Korea, and Grace, Lynn and Elim from Taiwan.

Our first stop was a children’s camp organized by the Shihlin church in Taipei. We spent the next two days at camp, playing games, singing songs and learn-



“I Love Taiwan” participants from Canada, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and India take a photo at a church in Hsinshu, following service.

ing about God. As someone who doesn’t speak either Mandarin or Taiwanese, I struggled a bit at the start. It was difficult to understand what was going on, what was being asked of me, and what the kids wanted. I was fortunate to be surrounded by people who were ready to translate instructions and what was being said. We played various games that were similar to some that I’ve played at church camp in Canada and found fun ways to talk about religion with the kids.

Next, we travelled to Pingtung, in southern Taiwan, for another children’s camp also hosted by the Shihlin church. This camp took place in a smaller community with many indigenous children. Much like the camp in Taipei, we played games, sang songs and learned about God and church. I had the opportunity to present about Canada to the children, which opened the door for many conversations with the kids about

what life is like back home.

After another three-day camp in Pingtung, we drove back to Taipei, and then Hsinchu to spend a few days as tourists. We went to many night markets and tried amazing food, learned about Taiwan’s history and the indigenous people of Taiwan.

The last two days of the trip were spent back together as a big group in Hsinchu at the Presbyterian Bible Church. We each got to share about our experiences the past two weeks and Emily and I got to present about Canada—and share maple candies with the other participants!

This trip was unlike any experience I’ve had. The warmth and welcoming nature of everyone I met was incredible. Everyone worked so hard to make sure that I was comfortable and that I understood what was happening despite the language barrier. I was welcomed into people’s homes and I couldn’t be more grateful to

the churches for their hospitality. Being together with people from around the world who shared a religion was inspiring. Taiwan is a beautiful country full of greenery and beautiful landscapes and the kindest, most welcoming people—I hope everyone gets to visit at some point.

A Once-in-a-Lifetime Opportunity

By Emily Delaney, Lakeview Presbyterian Church in Thunder Bay, Ont.

It was after my church service on May 5, 2024, when my pastor approached me and asked if I would be interested in going to Taiwan. I paused for a moment, then looked at him sideways and said, “I don’t know anything about Taiwan, but I’ve heard it’s a beautiful country.” This prompted a conversation about the annual “I Love Taiwan” (ILT) mission trip.

As I was driving home and pondering whether I should apply for this opportunity, the Bible quote from Joshua 1:9 came to my mind: “Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or

Continued on page 37



“I Love Taiwan” participants take a photo at a Presbyterian church in Taipei.



Ty Coulter and Emily Delaney.

Continued from page 36

dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Although I have travelled internationally, I had never been on a mission trip. For this reason, I made the decision to participate with an open heart and an open mind, not knowing what I would be doing, who I would be meeting, or where I would be going.

This year, ILT welcomed participants from seven different countries, including Japan, South Korea, India, Canada, United States, New Zealand and Taiwan. After landing in Taipei and being escorted to the place that we would be staying for the first few nights, we had the opportunity to gather together. Due to flight delays, Ty and I (the two Canadian participants) were the only fluent English-speaking participants in the room. I was uneasy because the only person I knew was Ty, who I met at Pearson airport earlier that day. Fortunately, Google translate allowed us to effectively communicate with others, and before we knew it, we were making friends.

After the first few days exploring Taipei and learning about its history, participants were split into groups that ventured out to different areas of Taiwan to learn about the local cultures and traditions within those areas. My small group was comprised of four people: Sailo from India, Duku from Taiwan, Juan from South Korea, and myself. We were blessed with the opportunity to explore Hualien and Taitung, which are on the east coast. In these areas we got to see the ocean and beaches, but our journey ultimately led us into the mountain ranges where we stayed with one of the 16 indig-



A photo taken after Thanksgiving Sunday with part of a local church's Sunday school.

enous tribes of Taiwan, the Bunun tribe. During these two weeks, we explored a variety of communities/villages comprised of 200–300 people and visited over 20 different churches where we had opportunities to interact with children, youth and young adults through a variety of activities.

The Bunun people have many amazing qualities that became evident very quickly. They are very welcoming and proud of their culture and heritage. Although we spoke different languages, we were welcomed with open arms. We were taught their dances and songs, and we got to try on traditional Bunun clothing that had hand-stitched patterns they learned from their ancestors. They also demonstrate so

much positivity and gratefulness. I saw so many smiles and heard so many laughs throughout this amazing journey, which brought light into my life and encouraged me to promote positivity with my friends and family. The Bunun people are also steadfast in their faith. This is evident in everything that they do. We were encouraged to share our faith stories with them and to pray out loud in our own languages, despite the language barrier. Everything that they had in their lives they attributed to God's graciousness and leadership that brought them to where they are today.

Even though I came home from this trip with endless stories of adventures and fun, and many photos to prove it, the lessons

that I learned did not come from whitewater rafting, hiking in the jungle, or jumping into a waterfall; but instead they came from the people that I was surrounded by. When our groups were asked

to share about our experiences in Hsinchu on the trip's last day, the realization hit me that I will never be able to re-experience this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I will be forever grateful for.



Wearing traditional Bunun clothing. Pictured (left to right): Sailo, Juan, Emily, Duku.

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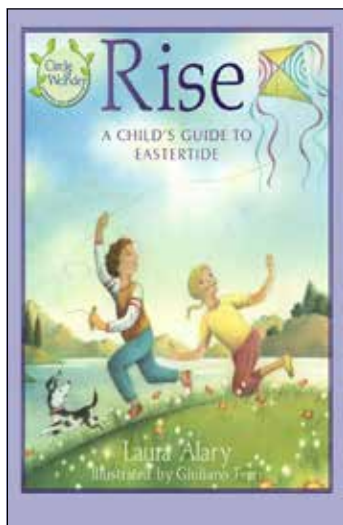
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BOOK REVIEW



A Review of *Rise: A Child's Guide to Eastertide*

By the Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset,
Calvin Presbyterian Church in
Toronto, Ont.

Rise: A Child's Guide to Eastertide
Written by Laura Alary,

illustrations by Giuliano Ferri
Published by Paraclete Press
(Brewster, Massachusetts,
coming January 14, 2025)

In many churches that follow the
liturgical year, the pulpit fall, the

minister's stole and the choir
stoles all match the colour of the
season. In my church, someone
who has attended the church for
more than 50 years noticed this
for the first time this Fall! These
subtle ways that the church cele-
brates its life together are often
the best teaching tools for our
children.

Laura Alary's *Rise: A Child's Guide to Eastertide*, starts by drawing attention to the way the church is "dressed in white and gold." *Rise* is the fourth book in the "Circle of Wonder: Liturgical Year Resource Set" by Paraclete Press and will be out in print in January 2025. Each book of this lovely series on the church seasons (Advent, Lent/Easter and Pentecost/Ordinary Time) follows this same pattern. In each season, the church is dressed in blue or purple or green.

As the author invites us to see the world through the colours and lens of the season of Eastertide, she weaves the resurrection stories of Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene on Emmaus Road, and to Peter on the beach, together with church, community and family celebrations. Images and stories of creation are woven throughout the book, making connections between the church year and the natural world. Laura uses the familiar metaphor of the caterpillar and butterfly, introducing children to the concept of change and new life, but at the same time, her language is fresh and poetic, often putting a new spin on a teaching or a story that we may have heard many times before. That quality makes this book wonderful for both new and seasoned Christians.

The book does not shy away from the difficult emotions of Easter. Laura acknowledges a child's natural fear and frustration that significant people in their own lives who have died are not resurrected like Jesus was. She gently suggests how God is working through death even now. She is playful with how resurrection changes Jesus, allowing

him to be hidden in plain sight—both for the first disciples and for us. These themes of joy, loss, change and finding God within ordinary experiences are threaded throughout the whole book in delightful ways. Telling the story of Peter's denial and Jesus' forgiveness, Laura talks about how resurrection changes us, too. Freed from our past mistakes, we are able to begin again and serve God and one another with joy. Easter joy can be shared and lived out in helping our neighbour in concrete ways. The book helps children describe who Jesus is (the good shepherd, the host, the vine), and help us both see him in the world and also teach us how to help others. In fact, we may find that in our ordinary lives as we eat family meals, seek to feed the hungry, and try to befriend the lonely, we are actually encountering Christ every day—hidden in plain sight.

As Laura Alary's church year series expands, we are given the gift of seeing Easter not as a specific day, but as a way of life for Christians—children and adults alike—all year long. The book reminds us that every Sunday is a "little Easter" in the Reformed tradition, as we celebrate Christ's resurrection not just every year but every week. With its colourful, whimsical illustrations and down-to-earth storytelling, the book engages young audiences to see this core story of our Christian faith unfold in everyday life in captivating ways.

Rise: A Child's Guide to Eastertide—and its companions for Advent, Lent and Pentecost—would make a wonderful addition to the children's space in your church, or in the pews for children to pick up during worship, or as gifts for parents to help them share faith at home. I highly recommend them all and commend Laura Alary to you as one of The Presbyterian Church in Canada's best teachers of our children as she conveys our faith to the next generation in accessible, theologically sound, and lyrical ways again and again through the power of story.

PULPIT VACANCIES

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Atlantic Provinces

Alliston, WellSpring
(full-time minister)

Halifax, Church of Saint David
(full-time minister)

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

Sydney Mines, St. Andrew's and North Sydney, St. Giles
(full-time minister)

Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Almonte, Community
(full-time minister)

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

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

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

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

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

Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Alliston, Knox & Mansfield, St. Andrew's (full-time minister)

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

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

Keswick, Keswick
(full-time minister)

Lancaster, St. Andrew's & Martintown, St. Andrew's
(full-time minister)

Milton, Boston (full-time minister)

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

Toronto, Ghanaian (interim
minister [contract])

Toronto, Leaside
(full-time senior minister)

Toronto, Mimico (full-time
minister)

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

Toronto, Trinity York Mills
(full-time minister)

Toronto, York Memorial
(half-time minister)

Vaughan, Vaughan Community
(full-time youth minister)

Southwestern Ontario

Ailsa Craig, Beechwood
(part-time minister)

Burlington, St. Paul's
(2/3-time minister)

Hamilton, Central
(full-time minister)

Hamilton, Trinity
(full-time minister)

Jarvis, Knox (full-time minister)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stratford, Knox
(full-time minister)

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

Alberta & the Northwest

Calgary, Calvin Hungarian
(full-time minister)

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

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

British Columbia

Campbell River, Trinity
(full-time minister)

Surrey, City Centre
(full-time minister)

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

Vancouver, Fairview
(full-time minister)

DEATH NOTICES

Read full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

William Richard Bennett (Bill) Herridge
Deceased August 1, 2024
Toronto, Ont.

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

Raymond MacNair
Deceased August 11, 2024
Dalhousie, N.B.

The Rev. Diane Beach
Deceased August 21, 2024
Medicine Hat, Alta.

The Rev. Deane Gordon Cassidy
Deceased August 27, 2024
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

The Rev. Robert (Bob) C. Jones
Deceased Sept. 5, 2024
Deseronto, Ont.

Noreen Marshall
Deceased Sept. 5, 2024
Thornhill, Ont.

The Rev. David Murphy
Deceased September 14, 2024
Ajax, Ont.

Joyce Ivy Grace Bawcutt
Deceased Sept. 17, 2024
Paris, Ont.

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JUST WONDERING...



Submit questions to connection@presbyterian.ca

Why do I not see news of events or other important information from the PCC in my social media newsfeeds?

Answered by Callie Long, Communications Office

What an excellent question. Who among us hasn't wondered why or how they missed a post about news they are interested in?

Before I lay out a few simple things that you can do to fix this perennial problem, know that we also post news items on our website (presbyterian.ca), which means you don't have to rely solely on social media to see our news about events, webinars, resources and so much more. You can also subscribe to our e-newsletter (presbyterian.ca/subscribe), which will land in your inbox usually the first week of each month. The newsletter contains all the news, events, resources and other information we post on our website and social media pages.

But so many of us increasingly rely on social media to connect, share, find information and read about others' experiences. And we wonder why we don't see every post we'd like to see in our feeds.

The short answer is two-fold: algorithms and user engagement.

An algorithm is a system or process that social media platforms use to identify, categorize and display the content you receive. These processes or sophisticated calculations (with the downside of often baked-in bias) "decide" or determine the content most relevant to you, especially if you don't engage with a page, as a rule. So, Meta (Facebook and Instagram) will sort your social media behaviours and decide you aren't interested in the page and likely you won't see us in your Facebook or Instagram feeds.

Here are a few simple things you can do to engage with our pages and indicate (tell the algorithm) that you want to see more of our content:

- Check your notification settings. You can enable alerts for

posts from the PCC, which will let you know when we update our pages.

- If you haven't already, please follow (or like) our account and double-check to make sure that you have.
• Adjust your feed preferences if you can. Prioritize accounts like ours if you want to see them first. Some platforms may have content filters that hide posts based on your user preferences. Check to see if our posts have been filtered out in your account.
• Visit our pages on social media and scroll through our posts. Hopefully, you will find what you missed.
• Engage with our content! Let us know if you like what we're posting. Comment on or share our posts. We always appreciate your kind and thoughtful comments, particularly for topics we know will generate anger and abuse—the lifeblood of algorithms. After years of managing our social media accounts, we know that in the social media world, the one with the loudest voice gets the ball rolling and, in a sense, sets the agenda, further fueling and privileging outrage, dissent and division. This is not our way, even if we understand that not everyone agrees with the PCC's policies and stands.
• Sign up on our website to receive a daily digest of news items we've posted on our website.

If all else fails, we are a direct message (DM), email or phone call away.

The most important thing is to stay connected. We post frequently and regularly—in fact, daily—to our news feeds on our social media channels. Algorithms are tricky, but by taking a few practical steps, chances are that you will see more of

Many see the modern church as irrelevant. Every day there is news about the evil being perpetrated in the Middle East and yet the silence emanating from The Presbyterian Church in Canada is deafening. Surely the murder of thousands of women and children is still relevant in today's age.

The level of destruction and suffering from the war is devastating and worsens as conflict continues. A ceasefire is desperately needed.

The church's web page "A Just and Lasting Peace: Palestine-Israel" (presbyterian.ca/2024/04/08/a-just-and-lasting-peace/) is the main source for information pertaining to the church's responses to this ongoing crisis.

It includes statements and letters from ecumenical connections in the Middle East, including a letter from patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem, statements and letters signed by the church related to the crisis, donation suggestions, a prayer resource, information from partner organizations and links to additional resources.

You may also be interested in

learning more about the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage, which the church participated in earlier this year. There is an article about this on page 1 of the Fall edition of the Presbyterian Connection. Visit presbyterian.ca/connection to see past issues. The article also details several of the Calls to Action that many in the ecumenical community, including the PCC, are advocating for.

Can we ask people who want to study to be a minister if they are LGBTQI+ or about their stance on same-sex marriage? And can we refuse to let them study if their opinion is different from ours?

Adapted as a response from the "Guidelines re Marriage and Ordination" written and distributed by the Clerks of General Assembly. The full document can be found at presbyterian.ca/gao

Candidates for ministry and eldership should not be asked about their status as an LGBTQI+ person, just as non-LGBTQI+ people are not asked questions related to their sexuality. The document Calling a Minister (available at presbyterian.ca/mcv) has guidelines for presbyteries, interim moderators and search committees (first created in 1999 and last updated in 2023). It includes guidance on questions permitted under Human Rights Legislation. This is a reminder of the approach

the church has taken for decades.

LGBTQI+ people must be free from an uncomfortable or even untenable silence about this important aspect of their lives. In the same way that non-LGBTQI+ people have been able to speak comfortably of their family situations, LGBTQI+ people must be free to talk about their relationships without fear of discrimination or alienation within the church.

Certifying students for ministry, calls of ministers and the elections of elders still must be within the context of our usual discernment processes. These guidelines, therefore, do not make special provisions for certain people but seek to ensure equality of consideration. Equality of consideration means that a presbytery or a Session would ask the same interview

questions of all candidates regardless of the person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual orientation itself has never been a barrier to office in our church (A&P 2003, p. 545, 40). If a candidate freely chooses to disclose that they are LGBTQI+, married or single, it should make no difference in our process. Since the adoption of Remit B, 2019, by the PCC's General Assembly permits the acceptance of two parallel definitions of marriage, members of courts have liberty of conscience to believe that marriage is between a man and a woman or between two adults. The adoption of Remit C, 2018, permits the ordination of LGBTQI+ people (married or single), so such a person should be welcomed and feel welcomed by the courts of the church.

our posts. Just remember not to scroll idly by. Share our posts to your feeds. A quick like or love or a short, friendly comment (or kind and gentle disagreement if you are so moved) will also tell the calculations driving your social media newsfeeds that the PCC and its daily posts and updates matter to you (as you do to us!).



“a future and a hope”

Jeremiah 29:11

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