



A Story of Ecumenical Shared Ministry



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

On Sunday, October 5, Calvin Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., celebrated 100 years as a congregation. On that same day, our partner in Ecumenical Shared Ministry, Deer Park United Church, celebrated 100 years as a congregation of the United Church of Canada. Over the weekend, with a community event featuring live music from our adult, youth and children's choirs, as well as a sale of homemade preserves, pickles, jams and baked goods, we also celebrated the 100th birthday of the United Church of Canada and the 150th birthday of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It was quite a weekend!

In worship on Sunday, we

reflected on our unique histories. We started as one congregation called Deer Park Presbyterian Church. But after the vote regarding Church Union, taken from Dec. 24, 1924, to Jan. 8, 1925 (with voting held every day except Christmas Day and Sundays), the congregation, like hundreds of others across the country, parted ways. What we didn't know 100 years ago, is that one day we would be worshipping together again.

What follows is an excerpt from the sermon I preached on October 5:

In 1925, this body of Christ's church seemed to be broken into two. In a large congregation of 1,151 members at Deer Park Presbyterian Church, just over two-thirds voted to join Church Union, taking a step of faith to try a

new way of being church in Canada. Just over one-third voted to stay out of the Union, with the conviction that the continuing Canadian Presbyterian witness was the way in which God was calling them to live out their faith. The vote was tallied just after the new year in 2025 and the Sunday after that, on January 18, 2025, two smaller congregations gathered to worship.

One congregation gathered as they had the Sunday before, in their beloved church building at 129 St. Clair Avenue. The congregation that gathered at Deer Park must have felt both triumphant and sad that day. They had won the vote, but lost as well. They felt they had done the right thing and were following the Spirit's bold call. But some of their friends, with whom they

had worshipped and worked, and cried and laughed, were not there that Sunday, or the days that followed. The body of Christ was fractured.

The other congregation gathered just a few blocks away in the Queen's Royal Theatre on Yonge Street. A *Globe and Mail* newspaper advertisement from Jan. 17, 1925, reminded them to bring their own hymnbooks and Bibles, because they no longer gathered in a church building that supplied them. The congregation that gathered as "Presbyterians of the Hill District" must have felt both triumphant and sad. They had lost the vote, but their convictions had won the day. They felt that they had done the right thing and were following the Spirit's bold call. But they had lost their church home, and some of their friends, with

whom they had worshipped and worked, and cried and laughed, were not worshipping with them anymore that Sunday, or on the days that followed. The body of Christ was fractured.

Both congregations had to re-group, re-vision, and re-shape themselves. They went on to foster creative, faithful, beautiful ministries—making more bold decisions that were faithful witnesses to Christ's gospel.

It must have been difficult. The continuing Presbyterian congregation called a new minister from Ireland, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Wasson, who accepted the call by telegram. Jim Oliphant, who was a little boy then, and who came to watch the stones going up at Calvin Church and to feed

Continued on page 4

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

A “Go and See” Pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine

By the Rev. Jeffrey Murray

“Let us go now to Bethlehem and see,” the shepherds said to one another, after hearing the good news of Jesus’ birth. In the gospel of Luke, our attention is not focused on the Emperor of Rome, the Governor of Syria or the King of Judea—all who are mentioned in order to situate the story of Jesus under Roman occupation. Instead, the writer of Luke places lowly shepherds in their fields at the centre, and illustrates this further through the simple lives of Joseph, Mary, Jesus and the people Jesus interacts with. We follow the story of Jesus as he touches the lives of the poor longing for good news, the captives hoping for release, the injured seeking recovery, and the oppressed dreaming of freedom. The gospel announces the restoration of the humanity of those treated inhumanely. And

then we are led to the horrific crucifixion, where God’s son is killed by occupying political powers set to humiliate and dehumanize.

The “go and see” Moderator’s pilgrimage to Palestine and Israel, approved by General Assembly, follows the gospel trajectory. We began in the shepherd’s fields outside Bethlehem. From that vantage point, we could see the West Bank under occupation. Yusef, our guide who works for the World Council of Churches in Jerusalem, pointed to how the land is carved up. We could see the ever-expanding illegal Israeli settlements and settler roads, checkpoints and the wall that divides Palestinian people from their land, family and workplaces.

The signs of settler colonialism and life under occupation were in plain sight everywhere in the West Bank, as we met with partners and human rights organizations. We also learned about life in Palestine and Israel as we talked with people on the streets, in shops, cafés and bars. Along with what we saw, we heard stories of family members killed by Israeli soldiers without cause, people, including children, detained in prisons for no reason, children being shot at for throwing stones or at random. We met with people connected to Rabbis for Human Rights and other organizations that support Palestinian farmers during the olive harvest, because farmers are often intimidated and attacked by settlers. A woman working for KAIROS Palestine, shared her experience just a day before meeting with us of being harassed and humiliated at a checkpoint on



The Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

her way back from the city of Ramallah. We heard stories of people cut off from family and friends even within Palestinian territory, given that communities within the West Bank can be closed off at any moment by Israelis forces.

During the pilgrimage, my attention was drawn to the realities not readily available in the news since the attacks by some extreme elements of Hamas on October 7. The world’s attention has been focused on the Israeli hostages—their faces, names, ages and anxious family members pleading for their release. The pictures of hostages held by Hamas were on display and projected on buildings. We can’t avert our eyes from the humanity of hostages and those killed on October 7, as their pictures move us to rightfully grieve their deaths. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu drew the world’s attention to them in his speech to the United Nations this September as he described that day as “the worst attack on Jews since the Holocaust. They slaughtered 1,200 innocent people, including over 40 Americans, and foreign nationals from dozens of countries represented here.” As he described some of the horrific actions by Hamas, including taking 250 hostages, he called them “monsters.”



The Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon, the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald and the Rev. Jeff Murray with Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem.

In the attacks on the population in Gaza, Netanyahu wants us to think only of the trauma and victimization of the Jewish people, but reality is not so narrow. We must think of the full reality of what is happening to Palestinian and Israeli people.

We met Anton, who works with Rabbis for Human Rights. He spoke about the horrifying reality that within two generations, Jewish people went from being victims in the holocaust to the State of Israel practicing genocide. Anton emphasized that ugly reality of antisemitism, and also the reality of the genocide of Palestinians. We met Elana, whose son, an Israeli soldier, was killed in the attacks on October 7. Elana was active in groups committed to fostering empathy and dialogue between Israeli Jews

and Palestinians before October 7. Since her son’s death, she has increased her efforts to seek peaceful co-existence in her work with the Parents Circle – Families Forum. She expressed her horror and dismay over the State of Israel’s killing of Gazans who were not responsible for the October 7 attack. She protested Netanyahu’s government, which she holds accountable for her son’s death.

I write this article during the Thanksgiving weekend in the first phase of an unstable ceasefire. This initial step of this ceasefire included the release of the remaining hostages held by Hamas, in exchange for almost 2,000 Palestinians who have been detained in Israeli prisons, some held before October 7, 2023. That is a staggering number that may



The Rev. Jeff Murray, Moderator, with Nader Anton Abu Amsha in Bethlehem.

have caught some by surprise because detained Palestinians are rarely reported.

The Israeli military campaign in Gaza has killed more than 65,000 people. During our visit we met with people at Defence for Children International and Addameer, organizations that collect data and track details of Palestinian detentions. The number of people taken captive by Israel increased from 5,200 to 11,100 since October 7, 2023. Most of these prisoners are from the occupied West Bank—400 of them children. Israel has disappeared Palestinians, and the lawyers who are able to meet with detainees relayed stories of torture, beatings, rape, medical neglect, malnutrition and infections due to unsanitary conditions.

The disparity in the numbers of deaths and detained remind me of Judith Butler's reflections on the precariousness of life and grievability, referring to which lives are considered worthy of grief and protection. Unlike the victims of the October 7th attack and the hostages taken by Hamas, who are memorialized and recognized, dead and detained Palestinians are not pictured and named. In keeping with Butler's Frames



At the separation wall with the Director of Wi'am, Zoughbi Alzoughbi, and participants of the World Council of Church's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.

of War, Palestinian lives are not "apprehended" the same way, as they are reduced to disputed numbers and collateral damage in the war on Hamas. In her reflection on war, Butler writes, "If certain lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense."

Israel is a signatory to the

international rights of the child but claim that people under occupation aren't subject to the agreement. The responses to killing innocent Palestinian civilians, including children, medical workers and journalists, is framed as a response to suspected Hamas activity. By aligning these killings with an attack on Hamas, it dehumanizes and frames them in a way that fails to capture attention or to provoke a similar international cry to release Palestinians detained, for they are regarded as prisoners not hostages.

We are horrified and troubled by the attacks of October 7, which must be condemned. We must also be horrified and troubled by the violent and deadly Israeli domination of Palestinians that has endured for more than 75 years.

The Moderator's trip followed in the direction of the gospels, starting in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, and ending in Jerusalem, the place of death and resurrection. In Jerusalem, we met up

with Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah, who said, "This is the land of the resurrection, but now it is a land of death, a land of inhumanity, they kill us Palestinians as if we are not human." His plea: "Politicians need to do more and churches around the world must do more—they must stop giving to Israel. Churches need to know more, be conscious of what is going on and shake off the old idea of Islamophobia."

During our meeting with Sabbah, he reminded us that we are called to the ministry of reconciliation in the world, and that, "we are not just to be baptized and saved in our own homes. Our mission is the mission of Jesus to look for peace and reconciliation in the world and call out injustice."

From the birth of Jesus to the resurrection, the gospels turn our attention to the humanity of the oppressed, that we might go and see and hear the forgotten and abandoned side—to apprehend such precarious life as human and their losses as grieveable.



Meeting with Anton Goodman and Yakir Renbaum with Rabbis for Human Rights.

CORRECTION NOTICE

In the Fall 2025 edition, page 11, in the "Special Guests" section of visitors to General Assembly, the image of the Rev. Tsung-Jen Wang was incorrect. The correct photo and caption are pictured here. And on page 20, top left corner, the names of Ian and Lorelee Marnoch were incorrectly spelled. Our sincere apologies for the errors.



The Rev. Tsung-Jen Wang (right) with the Moderator.



Lorelee and Ian Marnoch.

PRESBYTERIAN **Connection**

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Moderator of the General Assembly:

The Rev. Jeffrey Murray

The national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada is located on the traditional territory of the Wendat, the Anishinaabeg and the Haudenosaunee nations. These lands are part of Treaty 13 (the 1805 Toronto Purchase Agreement held by the Mississauga of the Credit First Nation) and part of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum.



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

God was able to bring new growth

Continued from page 1

apples to the work horse, Charlie, who helped haul those stones, kept the annual reports from the years 1925 and 1926. Jim was an elder when I first came to Calvin, and his daughter let me borrow those reports.

In a Hill District Presbyterian Church Session report from 1925, Mr. J. Wilson, the Clerk of Session, wrote something that caught my eye: "Until after June 10, 1925 (the date set for Church Union), we were unable to meet, except as a body of worshipping people, but immediately after that date, application was made to the Presbytery of Toronto for permission to organize a Presbyterian Church."

What Mr. Wilson meant, of course, was that they were without a church building to call home. But when I read that line "we were unable to meet, except as a body of worshipping people," I thought—what other, what better, what more faithful way to meet is there?

While it must have seemed, at the time, that the body of Christ was broken, God was able to bring new growth and new life out of it, multiplying the good, and nourishing more people than one congregation ever could. Of course, that should not surprise us. There is nothing more central to God's character than that.

God can take what seems like a small offering and expand it to feed thousands. God can take what feels like defeat and turn it into something victorious.

God can use even tragedy and somehow work something good from it.

God can take what is broken, mend it, and make it whole.

The faithful people of Deer Park United and Calvin Presbyterian, ministering in different places and in different ways, led lives of Christian witness that were still connected in all kinds of ways over these past 100 years.

Starting in the 1940s, Calvin

and Deer Park joined together for summer services. And then in the 1950s, the Churches on the Hill group was formed, and soon they were walking together on Good Fridays, and then working together to create a Food Bank that feeds thousands of people in this neighbourhood every week.

Somewhere along the way (about 17 years ago) Deer Park United found itself without a church building after Imperial Oil moved away, taking the heat source of 129 St. Clair Avenue with them. They "were unable to meet, except as a body of worshipping people." Conversations over restaurant tables between their ministers, the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald and the Rev. Marie Goodyear.

Conversations that continued over boardroom tables between the governing bodies of the two churches led to a beautiful idea and plan to bring the two congregations together in ecumenical shared ministry. By the grace of God, the body was not broken after all, but rather one body with many members.

Under the legal agreement between Calvin and Deer Park, ratified by both denominations, the two congregations remain distinct in their denominational affiliations, in their governance, finances and in pastoral care—each with their own minister. But they share together in worship, education, outreach and hospitality. On Sunday mornings, you will not be able to tell who is

a member of Deer Park and who is a member of Calvin. You might sing from the Presbyterian Book of Praise or the United Church's Voices United hymnbook. You might hear the minister from Calvin or the minister at Deer Park preaching. We share one choir and one coffee hour. We serve the church as one body in Christ with many members. Our story is unique, but we at Calvin/Deer Park hope it won't stay that way. We believe that what God has done and is doing in the ecumenical shared ministry at Calvin/Deer Park represents a beautiful future for the church of Jesus Christ in Canada—unified and diverse, distinct yet together, joined in service and worship.



There are many congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada engaged in ecumenical shared ministries.

An **Ecumenical Shared Ministries Handbook** is available at presbyterian.ca/resources-congregations.

To learn more, contact Jennifer Astop, John Barrett or the Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald in the denominational office at 1-800-619-7301.

Hosting the Art Crawl

By Jean Lawrence, West Vancouver Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C.

West Vancouver Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C., was excited to be able to host the North Vancouver Artists' Guild for the Art Crawl this fall. Having this community event at our church was thanks to

the initiative, creativity and organizational skills of Elizabeth Celmains, a dynamic Board of Managers leader.

We had 18 talented local artists in the lower hall and sanctuary showing their artwork to the community during the two-day annual event. Saturday was a busy day with hundreds of art enthusiasts walking



The Rev. Dr. Afonso Issa at worship, before the Art Crawl continued on Sunday.

through the doors between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.

On Sunday, we had a short worldwide communion worship service just a few steps away from the sanctuary exhibits, before the art show continued. The congregation enjoyed the Art Crawl but also participated by providing tea, coffee and treats, much appreciated by the artists and guests. It was a pleasure to foster a community connec-

tion by engaging and celebrating local culture.

We look forward to more informal and inclusive ways for people to connect with each other and the local art scene, all part of our outreach goal of bringing the community into the church, particularly after finding a new home for most of our old pews in the halls of a high school in East Vancouver. Our new chairs, as well as being more comfortable for wor-

ship services, give us the flexibility of various configurations, including the Art Crawl in the beautiful sanctuary space.



Making room for art and worship.



Christian Education Exchange

By Jessica Foy, Life & Mission Agency

Serving in Christian Education can be isolating, especially in our small churches in small towns spread out across these lands. We want to help lessen the isolation felt by faithful people doing wonderful work. Come gather online monthly and connect with others who serve our faith communities, equipping them for discipleship.

You can be a minister, lay leader, paid staff, volunteer, part-time, full-time or a passionate retiree. You can serve children, youth, young adults, adults, seniors or inter-generationally. Our aim is to make the journey an enjoyable one with companions to rely on.

The meetings are hosted by the Christian Education & Youth Program team at 7:00 p.m. (Eastern) or 6:30 p.m. (Pacific) on the fourth Monday of each month. To receive the meeting link, please fill in the form at presbyterian.ca/christian-ed-form.

October 27, 2025

Seasons of Wonder: Planning Advent, Christmas and the Church Year

Gather for a session focused on planning meaningful Advent and Christmas experiences. We'll explore how the rhythms of the church year can shape and enrich our worship and programs, offering fresh ideas for engaging all ages.

December 8, 2025

Rest for the Soul: Caring for Ourselves in Ministry

Ministry is a calling—and it can also be deeply demanding. Join us for a time of honest conversation, encouragement and shared wisdom on nurturing our own spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being. Together, we'll explore practices that sustain us, so we can continue to serve with joy and resilience.

January 26, 2026

The Marathon, Not the Sprint: Developing Sustainable Ministries

Discover how to move beyond short-term thinking and create ministries that are long-lasting. Focus on building solid foundations, maintaining momentum and adapting to change without losing core identity.

February 23, 2026

Stronger Together: The Partnership Playbook

Challenge the scarcity mindset that keeps churches isolated. Learn to identify potential partners—other congregations, nonprofits, community organizations—and develop collaborative relationships that achieve more than any church could alone.

March 23, 2026

Accessible by Design: Planning Events That Work for Neurodiverse Participants

Learn to build accessibility into program planning from the start—provide clear schedules, quiet spaces, flexible participation options and advance information that helps neurodivergent people prepare and fully engage. Focus on simple changes that create belonging without requiring expensive renovations.

April 27, 2026

Real Talk: Ministry Check-In & Chat

Come for an open, supportive conversation about what's happening in your ministry context. Whether you're celebrating a recent success, navigating a challenge or exploring new ideas, this is a space to connect, reflect and learn from one another. Come ready to listen, share and be encouraged by the diverse ways God is at work in our churches and communities.

May 25, 2026

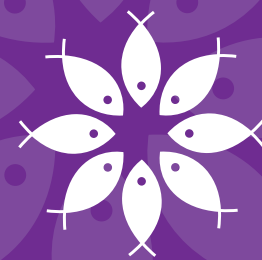
Is It Working? How to Evaluate Ministry Programs

Why did you start this program and is the "why" still in focus? Learn to gather feedback, prayerfully consider what you discover, and use insights to make thoughtful and inspired changes to ministries—including when to let them go.

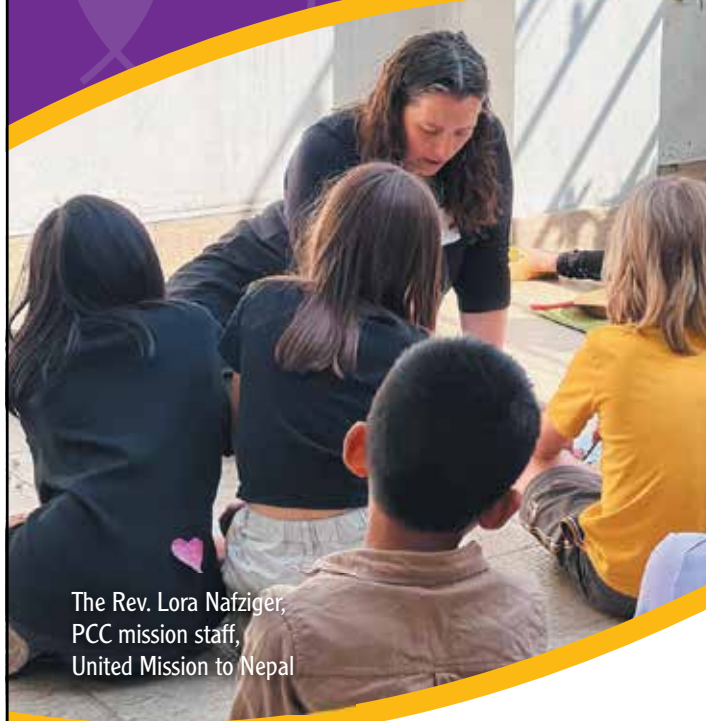
June 22, 2026

Start Small, Think Big: Launching Ministries with Limited Resources

Explore how to begin new initiatives even when budgets and volunteers are tight. Learn the art of discernment and how to harness the strengths of your community, nurture genuine partnerships and meet members of your congregation where they are.



Presbyterians Sharing



The Rev. Lora Nafziger,
PCC mission staff,
United Mission to Nepal

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Glad Tidings, the publication of the Women's Missionary Society of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, was first published in 1925. Borne from a number of previous publications dating back to 1884, *Glad Tidings* had 10,000 subscribers before the first edition was published.

Glad Tidings concluded its production with a final commemorative issue in Spring 2020.

You can now view all issues online through the Internet Archive. Visit archive.org/details/gladtidings.



Courageous Compassion:

Imago Palestina

By Stephan (Sven) Goslinski, cartoonist, illustrator and educator who serves as a ruling elder on the Session of Melville Presbyterian Church in Scarborough, Ont.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells a story that completely upends the way his listeners thought of “neighbours.”

I’m sure you’re familiar with the story—a man is travelling alone when, suddenly, he’s attacked. Bleeding out on the side of the road, he is overlooked by three upstanding members of his community, all with their own good reasons as to why they couldn’t stop and help. Then a man from a rival community sees him, helps him to safety, and pays for his care. “Who then,” Jesus asks, “was this man’s neighbour?”

For many of us, when we ask ourselves the same question, our first thoughts probably go to those who live near us, look like us and share our experiences. Almost everything in our society—from the media we watch to the places

where we work, to the nations and cities where we live—is built around encouraging us to care the most about the ones in our circle.

But as Christians, we’re reminded that our neighbours can be found anywhere, not just in our geographical, ethnic or ideological circles. Regardless of where they hail from, we understand all people to be made in the image of God—the *imago*—and that we are called to love each of these neighbours as ourselves. And especially, as Christ chose his examples intentionally, we are called to show special care for the neighbours that we find crushed, beaten down and ignored.

Sometimes though, they feel so far away.

I think, for many of us, this is the case with our Palestinian neighbours—particularly now as they face staggering devastation. I know for many people I’ve spoken to in my Christian community, your hearts may hurt for the people of Palestine, but it really does feel so far away, in more ways than

one. We wonder what we can really do to help when the tragedy seems so vast and beyond our understanding. We struggle to piece together coherent truth from the headlines and news-tickers that bombard us with information. We imagine the land of Palestine as we read about it in the Bible, but our images of the land and its people grow fuzzy beyond the first century AD.

Last year, I started the *Imago Palestina* project to help refresh that image and empower those of us in the West—particularly us Christians—in our faithful journey for justice and peace.

Imago Palestina is an illustrated periodical (available online at ImagoPalestina.substack.com and in print) built around the idea that understanding comes when we meet our neighbours, face to face. Each instalment (or, as I prefer, “Word of Introduction”) consists of a hand-drawn portrait and some information about one of our Palestinian neighbours—usually someone who’s involved in something we may be seeing on the news, on our phones, or sometimes, not at all.

While it’s written to be read by all kinds of people, *Imago Palestina* is rooted in my Christian faith. Most importantly, a philosophy of prayer is central to *Imago Palestina*. Each Word of Introduction concludes with a set of prayer requests, with the hope that readers are spurred on to move from non-specific prayers for “peace” within their own hearts or the walls of their church, toward prayerful action which embodies Christ’s hands and feet in the world.

As a Presbyterian, I’ve been particularly encouraged with the way the denomination as a whole has taken up this task of embodied prayer in recent days, such as with recent General Assembly decisions in support of boycotts, divestment and sanctions as forms of non-violent resistance against Israeli apartheid. At the



An illustration of Gaza’s Holy Family Catholic church and its congregation, drawn for a recent *Imago Palestina* instalment about the Christians of Gaza.

same time, I know that many in our congregations are talking about Palestine for the first time and many feel the confusion I outlined earlier. That’s where I hope *Imago Palestina* can help.

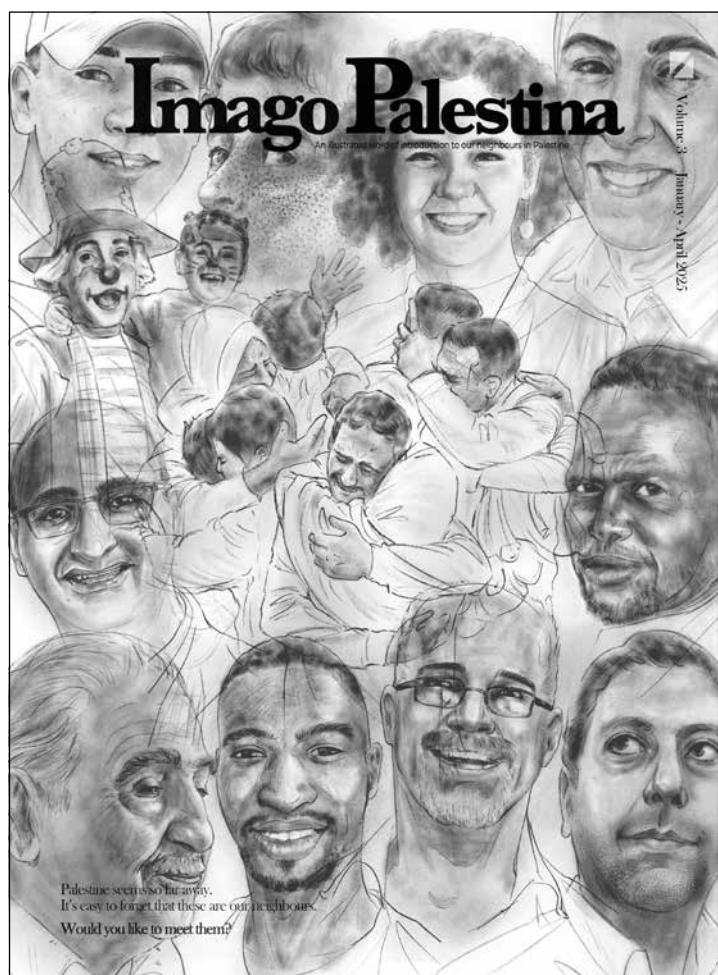
It’s my hope that *Imago Palestina* can be a tool that both individuals and congregations can use to replace confusion with courageous compassion. Moreover, my goal is to provide this tool with as few barriers as possible. That’s why the weekly digital version is hosted on Substack, a service which sends new instalments directly to your email inbox—no social media know-how required—and why the *Imago Palestina Magazine* is free for readers (thanks to some gracious funding by community members who believe in the project). I’m actively in search of congregations and worship spaces who may be interested in stocking free copies of *Imago Palestina Magazine* and/or *Imago Palestina* postcards in their narthexes, community halls, etc. In partnership with Christians for a Free Palestine (Toronto), I’ve also developed a short study guide for congregations interested in using *Imago Palestina* as a resource for a book study or similar small group initiative.



An illustration of Rabie Hussein, a young writer from Gaza. Rabie was featured in *Imago Palestina* in November 2024 and has since contributed writing and on-the-ground context on multiple occasions.

Palestine can seem far away sometimes, but I believe that together we can dismantle the walls which make that distance so vast. The first step is to meet our neighbours. I hope you’ll allow me to introduce you!

To see the full project, visit ImagoPalestina.substack.com or [Instagram.com/ImagoPalestina](https://www.instagram.com/ImagoPalestina). Contact Stephan at sven@svencomics.ca if you would like a copy of *Imago Palestina Magazine* or if you would like to know how you can get the magazine and other resources (including a study guide, postcards and printable materials) for your congregation or community.



The cover of *Imago Palestina Magazine* Volume 3.

Music That Connects:

How the Avondbloem Grant Is Bringing a Community Together



By Julianna Tang on behalf of the London Korean Christian Church in London, Ont.

This past summer, the London Korean Christian Church (LKCC) in London, Ont., came alive with music that reached far beyond its walls. Acoustic performances led by Danny Kim and Isaac Lee in June, followed by Brad Kerr in July, filled the air with joyful sounds that connected church members and neighbours alike.

These free Sounds of Summer concerts were made possible through the Avondbloem Experimental Fund of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, which encourages creative ministry projects that share the love of Christ in new ways. The fund supported two concerts during the summer and will also make possible a final event this November, Sounds of Autumn.

A season of renewal

These concerts were especially meaningful during a season of loss and renewal for both the congregation and community. LKCC's English ministry had been rebuilding after a difficult church split. In response to the denomination's decision on matters of human sexuality, more than

80 percent of the members left LKCC and the PCC, while others stepped away from church life altogether.

At the same time, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had left many in the Southcrest neighbourhood feeling isolated and disconnected. In this context, the Sounds of Summer series became a ministry of restoration. With support from the Avondbloem Experimental Fund of the PCC, the congregation reached out to neighbours, offering welcoming events for seniors, families and newcomers. The grant helped cover musician honoraria, hospitality, advertising and children's activities, transforming the church gym into a warm, inviting venue.

This support allowed a small congregation to dream big and offer hospitality to neighbours who might not otherwise enter a church building. What could have remained a simple idea instead became a living expression of ministry, showing that even a small church can be a vessel of God's love in its community.

Music, fellowship and joy

Both concerts were a great success. Although they were originally planned outdoors, rain forecasts meant they were ultimately held indoors, where the church gym became a warm and inviting space. White drapes lined the walls, tables were set with tablecloths, and string lights and lanterns filled the room with soft light.

The first concert in June featured Danny Kim (guitar, vocals) and Isaac Lee (cello), whose heartfelt performance

helped create a comfortable, coffeehouse-like atmosphere where guests could relax and connect. Volunteers served affordable hot dogs and drinks as people from the church and neighbourhood enjoyed the evening together.

For the second concert in July, organizers again prepared for an indoor event due to the forecast, though families still enjoyed a couple of hours outdoors. The church lawn came alive with a bouncy castle, children's games and food trucks before everyone moved inside. Brad Kerr performed a lively set that had the audience dancing and singing along, amid laughter and conversation.

Children enjoyed complimentary face-painting and colouring, while youth volunteers helped with decorating, setup and serving duties. About 120 people attended the first concert and 100 came to the second. Attendees were a blend of church members, friends and neighbours who had heard about the events through flyers, radio, social media and word of mouth. The crowd reflected London's diversity: people of many cultures, ages, and backgrounds came together to celebrate. One guest summed it up simply: "I loved it!"

Looking ahead: Sounds of Autumn

LKCC is now eagerly preparing for Sounds of Autumn, which will take place this November. As the weather cools, the concert will be held indoors and take on a cozy coffeehouse atmosphere with coffee, tea and light refreshments. Stephanie Jackson, a talented local singer, will perform and activities will again be offered for children.

This event will also include the help of a Grade 12 student volunteering as part of a high school Leadership course. This will be a wonderful opportunity for her to gain experience in community service while helping to organize the concert.

The goal remains to bring



Photos from the Sounds of Summer concerts.

people together through music and gratitude as the seasons change. LKCC hopes to make these concerts a cherished annual tradition, while fostering lasting relationships, celebrating local musicians and continuing to share the joy of God's presence through music.

Gratitude and connection

The impact of these concerts has extended far beyond music. They have strengthened LKCC's role in the neighbourhood by opening doors to new friendships, welcoming non-members, and offering seniors an affordable evening of fellowship. For youth, the events provided a meaningful way to serve others and experience the joy of ministry. These concerts have shown how powerfully music can bring people together—strengthening relationships, building community and drawing people closer to God.

The London Korean Christian Church expresses heart-

felt thanks to the Avondbloem Fund and The Presbyterian Church in Canada, as well as to all the volunteers, musicians and members of the London community who made these concerts possible. Through it all, the congregation has been reminded of how good and faithful God is.

What began as a simple idea of gathering neighbours through music has become a beautiful expression of God's grace at work in the community. Each concert evening was filled with laughter, friendship and song, a true expression of joy and togetherness. In the warmth of summer and now in the colours of autumn, the congregation has witnessed how God uses music to soften hearts, bridge generations, and draw people closer to one another.

These concerts have been a blessing, and LKCC prays they will continue to sow joy, friendship and renewal in the city for years to come.



The **Avondbloem Experimental Fund** makes grants available to bodies within The Presbyterian Church in Canada to support experimental projects designed to help spread the message of Jesus Christ and further the reign of God. To learn more, visit presbyterian.ca/funds.



Rooted: Urban Children's Gardens



With information provided by the Rev. Konnie Vissers, Kortright Presbyterian Church in Guelph, Ont.

In 2022, as part of her PhD research, the Rev. Konnie Vissers started the Rooted: Centre for Theology and Eco-Justice program, which has since planted four urban children's gardens through local congregations in Guelph and Hamilton, Ont. This grassroots initiative has taught dozens of children how to grow their own food sustainably and brought together churches at the edge of their neighbourhoods to engage local youth and children. In 2023, Konnie designed a summer camp curriculum to integrate ecotheology and food justice into the children's gardening efforts, and over 90 campers experienced Je-

sus' love in the garden. Several other congregations have now inquired about starting their own children's gardens and looked into the resources needed to run summer camps that teach Jesus' love and the value of creation.

Out of this growing interest, a new idea emerged, and a pilot project was launched. This year, Kortright Presbyterian Church received a grant from the Avondbloem Experimental Fund to establish a children's garden on its multi-acre property in a Guelph, Ont., neighbourhood. The pilot included a five-week youth and eco-justice course, specifically designed for young people experiencing eco-anxiety. At the same time, Konnie created a four-week Sunday school curriculum that was implemented alongside garden planting.



The Rev. Konnie Vissers and children in the children's garden. PHOTO CREDITS: ANNABELLE EDWARD

In July, the Kortright children's garden hosted a one-day workshop for 16 local children focused on sustainable gardening, food justice and environmental education. Building on that momentum, in September the initiative offered a five-week class for elementary-aged children, exploring themes of creation care, love for nature and sustainable gardening. The next phase will include the launch of a greenhouse garden and the planting of a fruit tree guild.

The pilot project provides hope amid our climate crisis by teaching children the love of Jesus as well as engagement in positive climate efforts and local agriculture. This unique missional effort offers care for youth and children who experience eco-anxiety and attends to Jesus' mandate, "Feed my sheep." Not only are children and youth literally fed because

of this work, young people are taught to grow food and are given positive, spiritually focused coping strategies.

These educational efforts have offered children and youth an opportunity to connect with God in nature, transform their relationships with the planet, and take home free, organic produce to bolster food security in their neighbourhood.



St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver

Located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam people, St. Andrew's Hall is the Presbyterian college at The University of British Columbia. We are a thriving intentional Christian community, home to over 200 students, staff and scholars. Through our shared common life, we provide a Christian witness on the UBC campus, and resource the church across the country through our Centre for Missional Leadership (CML). Contact us today to join our community or have our CML team help equip your Christian ministry.

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Evangel Hall Mission Video Campaign

By Ainsley Chapman, Executive Director, Evangel Hall Mission

Who would you be if you didn't have a home? Who do you get to be because you have one?

These aren't rhetorical questions. They're the heart of a new video campaign we've launched at Evangel Hall Mission—one that's changing conversations about housing in church communities.

When I first started talking to Presbyterian churches about building supportive housing on their properties, I heard the polite deflections: "We're a middle-class neighbourhood." The resistance was confusing to me because it didn't match my experience with the remarkable people living in EHM residences.

There was a disconnect, and it needed bridging.

The problem wasn't malice. It was misunderstanding. When people think "homeless," many conjure stereotypes that have nothing to do with the individuals who simply need stable housing. We wanted to introduce communities to their actual neighbours—not as case studies or statistics, but as people.

We partnered with Fresh Bread Film Co. to create "The Most Interesting Person in the Room," a video series that does something unusual: it focuses on who our tenants truly are, not who they were. I had seen Fresh Bread's work before and was struck by how they captured personalities—the things that make people



Ron.



Doris.



Horatio.

uniquely themselves.

During filming, I was asked about the backstories of our featured tenants. I had to admit—I didn't know. I know who tenants are now because of EHM's housing. I know that they like puzzles and bingo. That Doris loves cooking and music. That Ron loves watching old Westerns with friends. That Horatio wants to become a police officer.

This is what housing does. It lets people be people again—pursuing hobbies, building friendships, living simply. Everyone at EHM has overcome extraordinary barriers, but they're not here to be warriors. They're here because they want what anyone wants: peace, purpose and a place to call home.

YIGBY: Yes In God's Back Yard

As Presbyterian congregations reconsider what to do with their buildings and land, EHM's campaign offers a compelling answer: build housing. Not as charity, but as community-building that reflects the deepest principles of hospitality and neighbour-love.

The videos challenge assumptions about who needs housing—and in doing so, reveals the breadth of that need. Accessible housing for seniors and people with disabilities. Affordable housing for single parents, students, early-career workers and low-wage earners. Housing with supports for people managing illness. Intensive supportive housing for those with complex men-

tal health and substance-use challenges.

When churches consider redevelopment plans, when new neighbours move in, when social housing projects are proposed nearby—these moments are opportunities to ask: What has housing done for my life? And how can we make that happen in our neighbourhoods, our churches, our backyards?

I invite you to meet Doris, Ron and Horatio at EvangelHall.ca/MeetYourNeighbours. Watch their stories. Share them with friends, neighbours and community members. Because the most interesting person in the room might be the one you haven't met yet—the one who just needs a home to show you who they really are.

Celebrating 130 Years

By the Rev. George Paraskevopoulos, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in New Liskeard, Ont.

On Sunday, Oct. 19, about 55 members, friends and guests of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church gathered in New Liskeard, Ont., to celebrate 130 years of ministry with about 42 remaining in the lower hall of the church for a luncheon and a cake made by our very own elder Emeritus Sarah McCaig.

When St. Andrew's was founded in 1895, the first services were held in a school. The Rev. Frank Pitts was the first ordained minister in 1898. The first Presbyterian church building officially opened Christmas Day in 1899; it was a wood-framed building next to the manse. It later became the Masonic Hall and the building now used for worship was built in 1903. In 1967, major renovations took place to the front of the church.

The Rev. Janice Hamalainen,

who served as St. Andrew's minister during the period of 2003 to 2007, was our guest speaker for the anniversary service. In her message, Janice took us down memory lane, reminding us of the many ways God has blessed and used St. Andrew's as a beacon of light to the community through volunteers, ministers and countless events like this one. Janice pointed out from Matthew 6 that just as the birds put their trust in God to take care of their needs, we as a congregation must place our trust in the future, just as others in the past have placed their trust in God.

Janice also pointed out that music has always played a big part in St. Andrew's ministry, starting way back in 1895 when Nellie Pitts would cart her own piano to special music events. And 130 years later, using a different piano and organ, the music just carries



on, this time under the music direction of Debbie Bandy and guitarist Terry Elliott.

Special songs were sung by soloists and our praise singers, and all joined together for the blessing at the end of service. Songs were sung from newly dedicated song books, made possible by generous donations to the church, which feature 130 hymns and songs both traditional and contemporary.



Guest speaker the Rev. Janice Hamalainen.



“Bike to the Future”

By Samuel Farrugia,
Youth Worker for the
Presbytery of Montreal

If you had five days to visit 23 congregations spread out over approximately 7,000 square km, how would you do it? I decided to get on my bike. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

In March, I was hired as the Youth Worker for the Presbytery of Montreal. Faced with the challenge of getting to know the congregations that I was appointed to serve, as well as the need to develop a strategy to reach 14- to 30-year-olds, and the fact that I have a passion for biking, I decided to take to the road and visit (almost) all the congregations of the presbytery over the course of two weekends (September 27–28 and October 10–12). The “Bike to the Future” project was born.

As I was planning, it occurred to me that it would be fun to make a documentary of the tour. I reached out to a videographer friend of mine, and *voilà*, we were in business. Once the dates were set, several things had to happen simultaneously—congregations needed to be contacted in order to know when I would be dropping by, courageous cyclists willing to go for a (lengthy) bike ride had to be recruited, and money had to be raised to finance the production of the documentary.

Sept. 27 rolled around, and two twentysomethings and myself were off on our first day's journey—to the village of Mille-Isles, nestled in the

Laurentians, where the palette of fall colours was on glorious display. But let's backpedal a bit.

“Bike to the Future” seeks to make an impact in ministry to young people in our presbytery. The goal of the documentary project is to inform, galvanize, inspire and mobilize individual believers and congregations to reach youth and young adults with the gospel. Here's how:

INFORM – provide a powerful visual testimony of the diversity and breadth of the presbytery.

GALVANIZE – serve to create cohesive movements toward a united presbytery-wide effort that invests in ministry to young people.

INSPIRE – as viewers witness young people undertaking this biking “pilgrimage” throughout the presbytery, it is our hope that they will be inspired to contribute to youth ministry however they can, whether it be by mentoring, investing in local activities, volunteering as youth leaders, etc.

MOBILIZE – finally, we hope that this documentary project will serve to activate our congregations, ministers, lay leaders and young people to commit themselves to actively and intentionally build and facilitate youth ministries that will prepare the next generation of the Presbytery of Montreal to live a life of faith.

Back to the road. On the second phase of the tour, I pedalled west, first to Briarwood Church in Beaconsfield, and then south into the Monté-

regie region, situated between the St. Lawrence River and the border shared with the state of New York.

It was another sunny weekend, albeit a bit cooler than the trip that had taken us on a northwards loop from the Old Port of Montreal to St. Andrew's East, Lachute and Mille-Isles before coming back the next day to St. John's (Laval) and many congregations in eastern and central Montreal (September 27–28). On the evening of Friday, Oct. 10, I ended the first of three days “in the saddle” at St. Edward's (Beauharnois), where I shared in a hot dog roast with their youth group.

The following day took me to St. Andrew's (Huntingdon), Athelstan and Georgetown. At Georgetown, a couple of elders and several children were awaiting my arrival with sandwiches, cookies and juice. The final day—Thanksgiving Sunday—took me to Chateauguay and St-Lambert (South Shore) and then back onto the island of Montreal to Pointe-Claire and last but not least, to Westminster Church in Pierrefonds. I arrived to the smell of burgers cooking on the grill and was graced with a bouquet of flowers from the three grandchildren of a long-time member of the congregation.

Over 600 km since having left my home to begin the first phase, I had dropped in on 23 congregations and now had a much better understanding of the topography of the presbytery. From the heights of Mille-Isles to the corn fields of



Georgetown, from the majestic Church of St. Andrew & St. Paul in the heart of downtown Montreal to Ile Perrot, from the Ghanaian Church in Laval-on-the-Lake to L'église Saint-Luc in Rosemont to the Montreal Chinese Presbyterian Church in Verdun, the presbytery showed itself to be a veritable kaleidoscope, containing the many cultures and languages

of a large diversity of communities, both urban and rural.

I am thankful for all those who supported this project and for those who shared the journey with me. As we walk forward in faith, let us prayerfully welcome the future that our God has in store for us.

To view the documentary, email farrugia.samuel@gmail.com.

Celebrating 150 Years of Change

By Susan Winkelaar Kingsbury

As The Presbyterian Church in Canada moves toward the end of its 150th anniversary year, congregants across the country may find it worthwhile to pause and reflect on the journey so far, and where we are going.

The Presbytery of Ottawa did just that earlier this year by holding a joint service that took attendees through the prayers and hymns of the church's history, shone a light on its changes, and left people feeling a sense of optimism about the future.

The service brought together people from 19 member churches in the sun-filled sanctuary of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church on Woodroffe Avenue in central Ottawa, to mark the formation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in June of 1875.

The anniversary service began with a call to worship from 1863, recorded as the "First Sunday of month, afternoon service, Order of Public Worship" and went on to include psalms (sung *a cappella*), hymns and prayers from orders of service from previous years.

Under the liturgical leadership of the Rev. Chris Clarke, minister at Westminster Presbyterian in Ottawa, who, at 42, is the youngest minister in the presbytery, the service provided a window into the evolution of the PCC. Highlights included the fractious debate around the ordination of women (finally approved in 1966), changes brought by waves of immigration, actions toward reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous people, and the recent formal recognition and acceptance of



The Rev. Elizabeth Chan, pronouncing the assurance of pardon.



The all-ages choir.

same-sex marriage.

"Chris suggested we look at what sermons were preached in 1875 when the church unified and became the PCC, and I thought that was a great idea!" said Phil Winkelaar, an elder of Knox Ottawa and presbytery representative, whose passion for history led him to spearhead the planning of this anniversary event.

Chris and Phil pored through historical records, old newspapers, and even went to the National Archives to find material...but came up empty-handed.

"There was lots of information about meetings, but we couldn't find any sermons," Phil said. "So, Chris looked at old forms of worship and things started to come together."

The church's evolution was represented through music as well. A 50-voice massed choir of various ages led the hymns and sang the anthem *Gloria Deo* by Jay Althouse, prompting comments about how nice it would be to have such music every Sunday. But it was the African Chorus from St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church that really raised the volume, creating a joyful noise and sparking rhythmic clapping in the audience, demonstrating the modern-day diversity of the PCC.

An offering was taken for donations to the Peter Bryce Indigenous Scholarship in Medicine, a fund started by the Presbytery of Ottawa to support Indigenous medical students at the University of Ottawa and live out the Calls

to Action for the church by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 2015. Donations amounted to more than \$2,200.

Both Chris and Phil came away from the service satisfied that it had met the goal of celebrating the progress of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, an institution that has received its share of criticism for moving too slowly or being too traditional or bureaucratic.

"For me, it was important that it was a worshipful service," said Phil. "Not so much a celebration of us, but of what God has brought us to. Things have changed a lot, from being a Scottish church to being a multicultural, multi-ethnic church."

He said he was also pleased to have engagement from across the 19 churches of the Ottawa presbytery. Each church, as well as Gracefield Christian Camp, submitted a brief history of their congregation and the stories were cap-

tured in the bulletin handed out at the service.

Chris, too, was impressed by the interest shown by so many in the history of their church. His hope is that people left the anniversary service with a sense of confidence that God has been working in the Canadian Presbyterian church for a long time and will continue to do so.

When the PCC was established in 1875, it was a union formed through overcoming various rifts and controversies—and differences have continued to challenge the

church in modern times. Discussions around same-sex marriage and reconciliation, and even the ordination of women, have been dividing lines for the church at various times, Chris noted, and there is work to be done to continue to overcome division.

"I thought it would be cool for the service to show how who's at the table has changed radically in the last 150 years, and that's God working in and through his people, and we are just the most recent iteration."

To learn more about the presbytery, visit qeosynodpcc.ca/presbyott/news.html.



Every congregation in the presbytery was represented in the massed choir. PHOTO CREDITS: TERI LOVE



The African Chorus of St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church brought colour and exuberance to the service.

Heart to Art

Artistic Adaptations and Faith Transmission

By the Rev. Jacqueline Cleland, formerly with Oakridge Christian Ministry, part of the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church, based on a paper presented at the 2025 Pacific Northwest Regional Conference on religion and Biblical Studies

Oakridge Christian Ministry in Vancouver, B.C., like many churches, works on addressing the challenge of transmitting faith. In their context, it is to reach both Chinese Canadians and the broader Canadian populace through innovative artistic adaptations. This ministry, an outgrowth of the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church, strategically balances its rich heritage with engaging a contemporary, English-

speaking demographic. Their “heart for Christ” is expressed through art created by Chinese Canadians within the ministry.

The Oakridge area is currently undergoing significant demographic shifts. While most residents report Chinese ancestry, the top 10 growing demographics include Canadian, British, Scottish, East Indian, German, Polish, Taiwanese and Korean. Vancouver’s “Cambie Corridor Plan” is projected to more than double the population and add over 30,000 new homes, making it the city’s largest growth area outside downtown. In response, Oakridge Christian Ministry is proactively addressing community needs, including initiating a redevelopment process to incorporate 68 childcare spaces, 20 secured market rental units and a new church space.

To honour both its heritage and embrace new cultural diversity, Oakridge Christian Ministry has used art as an intentional outreach tool. This approach aligns with The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s *Living Faith* document, which



Julie Lowe during the Lenten concert, *A Testimony of Hope*.

affirms that ministry involves using the gifts we all have in the church and in the world to the glory of Christ.

A significant artistic adaptation is the mural “A Remarkable Constant” by Asian Canadian artist Jeanette G. Lee. This mixed-media installation visually integrates historical photographs, modern images and artifacts, chronicling the church’s journey from Chinatown. Presented in both Chinese and English, it fosters a sense of belonging and connects with diverse communities, including historical partners.

The ministry also emphasizes auditory expressions of faith. Musical missionary Julie Lowe’s Lenten concert, *A Testimony of Hope*, integrated music with personal testimony. The concert attracted approximately 100 individuals, predominantly unassociated with the church, inspiring

many to engage in prayer and faith conversations. The use of piano music resonated deeply within the Chinese community, given that over 30 million individuals were learning piano in China in 2016, a figure that is steadily increasing.

Furthermore, tactile art has been incorporated into worship. Pastoral Care and Outreach Coordinator Jacqueline Cleland collaborated with Artist Jeanette Lee on a worship event that used sculpture, allowing the congregation to experience a “tactile reminder of our call to be transformed, just as we see how an artist can transform thrown away scraps into works of art.” This approach acknowledges kinesthetic learning and welcomes a variety of interpretations, fostering community and a welcoming sign of diversity.

These artistic adaptations have effectively communicat-

ed Christian principles, lowering barriers for non-Christian neighbours to engage in spiritual discussions. This is evident in the mural’s integration of Chinese Canadian history, the piano concert’s resonance with shared cultural experiences, and the tactile art’s affirmation of diverse learning styles. The ministry has balanced its heritage with the need to engage a contemporary, English-speaking demographic, leading to expanded community outreach and direct conversations about faith.

Oakridge Christian Ministry is actively shaping a vibrant spiritual legacy for future generations, showcasing art’s powerful role as a catalyst for connection and spiritual exploration in a rapidly changing world. We invite people to lean into the skills they have, as God will meet them and bring great things!



From Backpacks to Blessings

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

Knox Presbyterian Church in Sooke, B.C., recently celebrated the start of the school year with a lively back-to-school barbecue and Backpack Blessing service. The event on Sunday, August 31, combined fun, fellowship and a heartfelt focus on mission.

The service, titled “Blessed are the Students,” was a vibrant reflection of the multi-generational nature of the Knox community. It began with a call to worship that welcomed “every age and every stage.” The sermon emphasized the



The backpack tag created for the backpack blessings.

importance of setting a strong foundation for the young, echoing the wisdom of Proverbs 22:6 (NIV): “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old

they will not turn from it.”

A highlight of the service was the blessing of backpacks, a powerful moment where each student’s backpack was anointed with prayer for the year ahead. As a reminder of their faith, each student received a backpack tag with the motto: “Be Love. Be Kind. Be True. Be the one God needs in the world.” The back of the tag was left blank, a space for individual prayer requests to be lifted up by the congregation throughout the year. The community’s prayers for students, educators and families were offered in a moving Prayers of the People, which blessed students’ minds, hands, mouths,

feet and eyes.

In addition to spiritual nourishment, the event had a strong missional component. Guests were encouraged to bring donations for the Knox Vision Society’s pantry program, which provides essential supplies to those in need in the Sooke community. Following the service, all kinds of students, young and old, broke bread together as a community at the barbecue.

The service concluded with a benediction that encouraged the children, families and all who love them to “go out into the beautiful world that God has made: to play, learn and love others.” It was a beauti-

ful expression of Knox’s commitment to nurturing its own congregation and serving its wider community, embodying the hope that faith is a journey of lifelong learning.



Inside the sanctuary at Knox Presbyterian Church in Sooke, B.C.

A Call and an Answer

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

A beacon of hope and a new chapter of ministry have officially arrived at Knox Presbyterian Church in Sooke, B.C., with the induction of the Rev. Jacqueline Cleland. The joyful and spirit-filled service took place on Sunday, June 8, marking a significant milestone in the church's 127-year history and its mission to serve the Sooke community.

The call for a new minister was a journey of great prayer and discernment for the congregation, as outlined in their congregational profile. Following the retirement of their previous minister in 2019 and a brief, difficult period of vacancy and seeking God's next best step forward, the church was left with a deep longing for stable, compassionate leadership within their new post-Covid context. The congregation sought a leader who would not only honour their rich history, which dates to 1898 when a small group first gathered in homes, but also guide them into a future that better reflected their changing community—one that is growing quickly and becoming younger and more di-

verse. As part of this process Knox has been blessed by the help of many people. The congregation extends its sincere gratitude to the Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith for his faithful leadership as Interim Moderator during this transition, and to all the ministers, elders and applicants who helped make this journey possible.

Knox's congregational profile reveals a church with a heart for mission, already active in the community through initiatives such as the annual Biker Blessing and the Knox Centre, a 42-unit affordable housing complex. They were looking for a minister with a "heart for the outsider" and a desire to "reach outside the church walls and into the community."

While praying to God, multiple good candidates were put forward that Knox was blessed to meet and pray for their future ministry. When assessing the Rev. Cleland, it was noted that her cover letter and sermon for the call were written with humility and a sense of divine calling, and spoke directly to the congregation's hopes. She expressed a deep resonance with their commitment to finding "new and novel ways to connect to God." She was particularly drawn to their



The Rev. Jacqueline Cleland. PHOTO CREDITS: THE REV. DANIEL MARTINEZ

innovative vision for "The Vine," a new ministry intended to grow beyond the traditional Sunday morning service. The Rev. Cleland's passion for creative outreach, born from her experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and expanded during her work at the Oakridge Christian Ministry, was believed to align perfectly with Knox's missional goals.

The induction service itself was a testament to the community's anticipation and shared hope. With scripture readings from John 21:15-17 and Hebrews 13:17-18, the theme of a shepherd guiding and tending to the flock was woven throughout the ceremony. The sermon, fittingly titled "Good Shepherd, Good Sheep," delivered by the Rev. Ray Sanford, reinforced the profound connection between a leader and their community.

The congregation's affirmation of faith, found in *Living Faith* 4.3, declared a collective prayer to be "guided into truth" and to use their "various gifts" for the Lord—a promise and a partnership with their new minister.

With the Rev. Jacqueline Cleland joining the team, Knox is not just filling a vacancy; they are launching a new era of ministry. As the lead minis-

ter and church planter for both the established Knox congregation and the new Vine initiative, she will be instrumental in nurturing the spiritual lives of existing members, while courageously seeking out new ways to share the Gospel in the wider community. Her appointment signifies the congregation's commitment to a vibrant, outward-focused future—a future where they can become a congregation that truly represents their community in terms of overall demographics.

The time of discernment can be difficult, but in Christ, the road ahead is one of great opportunity. With a compassionate and curious teacher in the Rev. Jacqueline Cleland, there is great hope that Knox Presbyterian Church is well-positioned to build upon its legacy and continue its faithful service to Sooke for another 125 years and beyond. The community prays that all can lean into their "growing edges" and bear much fruit together, rooted in love, mercy and justice.



Scholarship Awarded

*By Mike Cobb, Chair of
Dr. D. C. MacDonald
Scholarship Committee
at St. Paul's Presbyterian
Church in Simcoe, Ont.*

The Dr. D. C. MacDonald Scholarship Committee at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Simcoe, Ont., is comprised of Carol Croucher, Mikal Schomburg and Mike Cobb. Just ahead of the summer season, they reviewed the recommendations by the three Canadian

theology colleges for a student scholarship.

The three Presbyterian theological colleges are The Presbyterian College in Montreal, Knox College in Toronto and the Vancouver School of Theology in Vancouver.

After some deliberation, the committee was happy to award the scholarship to Hanvit Lee, who is studying at The Presbyterian College in Montreal. The scholarship will be \$6,000, which is approxi-

mately the income earned on the principal amount held in trust.

Hanvit is originally from South Korea, but had lived in Australia for several years before moving to Canada. He is currently serving in a rural and remote ministry placement in Manitoba, along with his wife, Minjoo.

Congratulations to Hanvit! We wish him well for his future studies and endeavours.



Hanvit Lee (centre) was awarded a scholarship.



Guiding Light for 130 Years in Vancouver

By Karina Shuen, Oakridge
Christian Ministry of
the Vancouver Chinese
Presbyterian Church

Lanterns have long been a symbol of light, hope and reunion of loved ones. During the Mid-Autumn Festival, they bring together family and community, leading us toward a prosperous future. This year, this same light reflected our faith and history of perseverance as we celebrated 130 years of God's grace at Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church (CPC) in Vancouver, B.C.

Just before Thanksgiving,

the church hosted a Mid-Autumn Festival lantern-making workshop led by Athena C. and Aaron L., bringing together over 30 children and their families from the neighbourhood. Each lantern was decorated with verses declaring that *God is the light of the world*, embracing a beloved tradition and spreading the Lord's good word to newcomers. In the following week, the lanterns were displayed throughout our church as a guiding light—a representation of growth toward greater spirituality and the connection of our culture throughout the generations.

These lanterns emit a similar light to the very beginning of the CPC community 130 years ago. On October 12, the Rev. Richard Watson shared an impactful message titled "Faithful Presence in a Foreign Land," based on Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7: "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7 NIV).

From humble beginnings in Vancouver's Chinatown in 1895, the light of the Lord has guided us this far through our steady faith. The very first believers of the Vancouver Presbyterian Church gathered amid discrimination, such as the implementation of the Chinese Head tax, leading to working long hours away from family and many other sacrifices. Enduring through these hardships, they found strength within hope, worship and through one another. Through God's guidance and the support of Presbyterian mission-



130th anniversary celebration with Jim N., Ken S., and Sue Y. PHOTO CREDITS: YING WAI Y

aries, they were able to build a church they could call home.

This light of faith continues to shine through those who make up our community. A longtime member of our congregation, Sue Y., who joined CPC at the age of three, shared her story of how the Lord guided her toward a journey of faith through the Chinese Presbyterian Church. One day, a missionary teacher informed her mother of a church nursery and Sunday school nearby. From living frugally above her aunt's laundromat in Vancouver's Chinatown to witnessing our newly developed church building in the urban Oakridge Community, this is truly a tes-



tament of God's blessing and eternal presence throughout our lives.

As we commemorate these 130 years, we give our gratitude and thanks to God's unerring faithfulness, a light that has guided our path through the past and continues to shine into the years to come.

Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Conference

By Helen McDonald, Convener,
Kerrisdale Presbyterian
Church Refugee Sponsorship
Group in Vancouver, B.C.

On February 15, Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C., hosted a Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Conference, which was made possible by an Innovative Ideas grant from the Presbytery of Westminster. The conference goal was twofold: to provide an opportunity for those with refugee experience to collaborate and share information, and to encourage others to learn more about this important mission work.

The meeting brought together approximately 60 participants, from 16 local churches of 10 different denominations, as

well as representatives of several refugee support organizations. Both in-person and virtual attendance were offered. The meeting opened with a presentation by former Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) representative Sevan Hajinian, who gave an overview of the refugee crisis and how the sponsorship process works through the Presbyterian church SAH (Sponsorship Agreement Holder) office.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, there were 122 million forcibly displaced people worldwide in June 2024, and the number continues to rise each year. The Presbyterian national office encourages all congregations to participate in a sponsorship, particularly

through the government's cost-sharing BVOR program, which can bring more individuals to the safety of a new life compared to the quota-restricted private sponsorship program.

A representative from the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program office Gizol Timoor Shah gave an informative talk on the resources available for the sponsor group and refugee during the resettlement process. Zahra Hashemi talked about the very important issue of mental health and how it is relevant to newcomers, especially as they may have experienced trauma in their journey here and have difficulties adjusting to their new life.

A series of presentations from various refugee groups who shared their stories was



inspirational as we learned how the dedicated work of volunteers can make a difference in others' lives. The conference ended with discussion on how the participants could continue to exchange ideas and informa-

tion after the conference was over.

To learn more about working together in support of refugees, please contact Kerrisdale's refugee sponsorship group at kpc.refugee@gmail.com.

Employment Program in Guelph

*Submitted by Rachel Fishback,
Knox Presbyterian Church
in Guelph, Ont.*

When a devoted member of Knox Presbyterian Church in Guelph, Ont., included a \$40,000 bequest in her estate specifically for local mission work, the church's Mission and Outreach Committee was tasked with exploring ways to use the gift within the community. It was hoped that the funds could provide some kind of transformative change.

Through their research, the committee discovered an exciting but dormant program previously run by another downtown church, Royal City Mission. The program "Clean Streets" had been suspended for over a year due to lack of funding. With financial support from Knox and the enthusiasm of the dedicated staff of Royal City Mission, it is now active again and already making a visible impact in the community.

Clean Streets is a low-barrier, work-readiness initiative that combines light maintenance of the downtown core, while providing opportunities for participants to build life skills, develop employment readiness and foster self-reliance.

Royal City Mission identifies and connects with potential participants either through referrals from other agencies or their programming. Candidates undergo a low-barrier interview and hiring process.

Each participant is coached on how to complete a Clean Streets shift, with the goal to eventually become part of the regular rotation schedule. When on the schedule, Clean Street participants are in contact with a Royal City Mission outreach worker who provides guidance on how to meet expectations and fulfill their responsibilities. With each shift, the Clean Street participants receive a living wage as well as the experience and dignity of a job well done.

Royal City Mission's first step in relaunching the program was hiring a manager to oversee operations. Once in place, restarting Clean Streets became their top priority and the program was fully running by the end of June 2025. The restart also provided an opportunity to strengthen the program. In the past, participants received an honorarium. Under the new model, participants are placed on the Royal City Mission's payroll, which helps build a résumé and prepare them for long-term employment. Staff offers support to the participants by helping them collect necessary documentation and, when needed, assisting them in opening bank accounts. In addition, participants work on a range of practical skills, including interview preparation, sticking to a schedule, completing pre- and post-shift checklists, safely disposing waste and maintaining clean carts. These skills ensure participants leave

the program better equipped for other employment and with stronger habits for success.

The restart of Clean Streets has generated strong interest, including an extensive waitlist of people hoping to take part. The program currently runs with 10 participants per cohort, each lasting 12 weeks. This structure helps participants build consistent work habits and life skills through regular shift schedules.

Even in its early stages, the program is showing results. One participant has already secured employment as a direct outcome of their involvement, demonstrating the program's potential to open doors for others. The program is also strengthening community connections in the downtown core. Many residents and business owners have expressed gratitude to participants for making the area cleaner, and participants themselves have noticed a visible improvement in the cleanliness of downtown.

Some quotes from program participants include:

"People on the street are thanking me! They see a noticeable difference in cleanliness downtown," said one participant. "People really appreciate downtown being maintained week to week," said another. Another said,



"For me, this is rewarding work. Interacting with the community in a positive way is a huge bonus."

In March, Knox Guelph hosted a dinner and silent auction, raising an additional \$3,220 for the Clean Streets program. With the current funding from Knox, Royal City Mission can run two full cohorts: the remainder of Cohort 1 in 2025 and Cohort 2 planned for Spring 2026. To support the launch of a third cohort in Summer 2026, Knox Guelph and Royal City Mission are actively seeking opportunities to raise additional funds. Additional funding will enable

the program to continue developing participants' skills and job readiness, while keeping downtown spaces cleaner and safer.

The Mission and Outreach Committee of Knox Guelph feels the relaunch of the Clean Streets program is a meaningful and successful example of the importance of collaboration between churches—the benefits of which have already been felt by both participants and the downtown community. It is the hope of both churches that, with additional funding and community support, the program's proven positive impacts will continue to grow.



This Advent, create a
Giving Tree!

The Presbyterian Church in Canada presbyterian.ca/givingtree

Giving Thanks to the Rev. Adam Bartha



Adam and Linda.

By Jane Thomas, the Gathering Place in Port Colborne, Ont.

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Arrivals and departures are part of church life. When it comes time for a minister to move on from a congregation, they can leave with our love and best wishes—but please

allow us, the congregants, some sadness.

The Rev. Adam Bartha’s Call to First Presbyterian Church in Port Colborne, Ont., began in April 2012. Recently out of Knox College and, before then, Hungary, he may have hoped for somewhere more urban, but if we didn’t win him over with our ham and scalloped potato suppers, the local fishing did. We taught him things, like how to eat haggis and tell knock-knock jokes. He taught us to say grace, even in a Tim Horton’s, to eat Hungarian chocolate, and to sing “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas” as an Advent hymn.

Seriously, we did learn more, much more—we from him and he from us. His weekly mes-

sages were outstanding. When we realized we could no longer afford our historic church, he vowed to stay with us as we pivoted to a store-front church, and again through Covid and our online presence.

What he learned from us we may find out in his Doctoral thesis—the reason for his return to Hungary. He’s comparing the traditional, theological model of church and the more “relational” model sought today by people influenced by technology and secular sciences.

In his dissertation, he writes, “The Church’s call ... is to be an incubator for establishing, maintaining, and practicing these dynamic, multifaceted, life-giving relationships; that is, be a place for grace and healing



The Rev. Adam Bartha.

to help people see and live out their true identity as children of God.”

All of us at the Gathering Place will miss him, but we

are proud of, and grateful for, what he has done, and what he will do in the future. *Menj a szerelmünkkel.* Go with our love, Adam.

The PCC’s 150th in Grande Prairie

By Carol Rigler, Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie, Alta.

Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie, Alta., celebrated the 150th anniversary of The Presbyterian Church in Canada on Sept. 6 at the Forbes Homestead with a tea and social gathering.

Forbes Homestead encompasses the history of Forbes Presbyterian Church in Grande Prairie. The Rev. Alexander Forbes and his wife, Agnes, were the first missionaries sent to the Peace River country to establish a church in 1910. We are blessed to be a part of the Presbyterian history in Canada and to share the legacy of 150

years of our denomination.

Our Sunday school has increased to approximately 25 children. Many new families have arrived from African countries and have become a part of our congregation. We are blessed and challenged as we share together the work of spreading the gospel.

After the anniversary ser-

vice, we had coffee time in the Agnes Forbes room. Cookies are always enjoyed, and visiting is part of our outreach each Sunday as we have tea and coffee and gather together.

Our congregation is diverse, and we accept the challenge of working together. The verse found in Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) is the foundation of our jour-

ney forward: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

As we reflect on our past, present and future, let us remember that our journey remains unfinished, and to continually pray and seek a future and a hope together.



Photos from the service to celebrate the PCC’s 150th anniversary at Forbes Presbyterian Church.



The APCE Annual Event

January 21–24, 2026

The Wyndham Grand, Pittsburgh, PA

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Event is available Online or In-Person | Contact Jess Foy for additional information | jfoy@presbyterian.ca

Indigenous Veteran's Day

By Darlene Overby,
presbytery-Winnipeg
Inner City Mission liaison

I was invited to Winnipeg Inner City Mission's "Gathering of Remembrance" for Indigenous Veteran's Day on Nov. 8, 2024. This meaningful event began with cultural performances, lighting of the sacred fire and words from veterans, followed by an unveiling of veterans' art in the Art Garden, then a



An original piece of art created by Marcus Houston for the Gathering of Remembrance brochure.

moment of silence.

As a board member at WICM and a member of the church, I was asked to read aloud the updated Apology of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for its complicity in colonization and the residential school system. This apology was presented at the 2024 General Assembly, and it's a tough read. But as we know, sometimes tough things are also necessary things. The church listed and acknowledged its wrongdoings and shortcomings, followed by a commitment to listen and learn, to work in support of Indigenous-led healing and wellness initiatives, and to stand in solidarity with Indigenous people and communities.

The event wrapped up with a supper of stew, bannock and Saskatoon jam. We were enjoying our refreshments when



Drummer Kirsten McKay is a two-spirit Anishinaabe Dakota singer/songwriter.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. I looked up to see an Indigenous man, his voice soft-spoken yet firm, as he said, "I can only speak for myself, and I forgive."

"Oh, thank you, miigwech," I said. He sat across from us and we spoke. The speaker was a former Chief and co-founder of an Indigenous development corporation, which helped create business ventures and employment for his people.

Although I didn't know what to expect when asked to speak on behalf of the church at this event, I felt kindness and reconciliation, which fills my heart with hope. While there are people and things we must never forget (including my mother, a residential day school Survivor), we can embrace each other and endeavour to work together in a good and sharing way.

On Nov. 18, 2024, we attended an event that launched Restorative Justice Week in Manitoba, organized by the Justice and Corrections Committee of the Manitoba Multi-faith Council. Restorative Jus-

tice Week is an opportunity to reflect on how restorative justice can be applied to daily challenges, highlight and discuss the most recent achievements of restorative justice in Canada, raise awareness on restorative justice values, and contribute to social change.

There were representatives from organizations such as the Lutheran Urban Ministry and John Howard Society, as well as Indigenous spiritual care advisers, chaplains who serve in correctional facilities, community workers from Indigenous Justice Circles, and more.

The reason I'm sharing this is in recognition of the closing prayer by an Indigenous Elder, a Cree language keeper. One of the things she said really stuck with me: in her language, the word for child is awasis, which translates to "a little light." She sees that, often, due to difficult circumstances, by the time a child is a preteen, their light may be dimmed and they turn to addictive substances. It's the responsibility of the community to help nurture each

child, each person's light. Then she looked up and asked Creator God to bless the helpers! It occurred to me that's what's being done here at WICM—everyone who works with the residents of Place of Hope, with the children and adults in the community; each positive step is helping lights to shine. Just as a candle loses nothing to light another candle, we accomplish much when we share with each other. A big thank you to everyone at WICM, as we help to nurture the light inside. Miigwech!

Learn more about Winnipeg Inner City Missions at wicm.ca.



Winston Wuttunee (left) is a Cree entertainer and Elder.



Doug Tizya, Canadian Armed Forces veteran; Pat Bruderer, WICM Director of Creativity at the Indigenous Arts and Cultural Centre; and Gerald Kuehl, artist, storyteller and historian.



Actor, producer and director Tina Keeper (left) was in attendance, along with many other prominent members of the Indigenous community.



Heritage Centre Grand Opening

The grand opening of the Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre took place in Carlisle United Church in Carlisle, Ont., (municipality of North Middlesex) on September 20. The dedication service opened with words from the Rev. Jeff Murray, PCC Moderator: "On behalf of the 2025 General Assembly, I offer greetings to you as you

celebrate the grand opening of the new Presbyterian Church Heritage Centre... It has been a long journey since 2017, when you began the search for a new home for the historical artefacts of our church. The grand opening is indeed a celebration of the work, hours, and dedication of those who helped make this move a suc-

cess, especially Ian Mason and Marilyn Repchuck. What a time to celebrate this achievement as the PCC celebrates 150 years of ministry."

Tours of the Heritage Centre can be booked by emailing pcheritagecentre@gmail.com or calling 416-469-1345. Visit pcheritagecentre.ca to learn more.



Ministry Forum Turns 2

By Rev. John Borthwick, Centre for Lifelong Learning, Knox College in Toronto, Ont.

In November 2023, we launched Ministry Forum into the digital world. The initial goals were straightforward: build a space for ministry leaders to find support, engage in conversation, and discover practical resources that matter in the day-to-day life of the church.

At the time, I imagined we'd try a few things—send a weekly email, host a few webinars, create a few online learning resources. I really couldn't

anticipate where we would be two years in. Today, we're sitting on top of more than 100 weekly email editions, looking back on 63 online events, nine in-person gatherings, six (soon to be eight) CHURCHx learning modules, nearly 300 curated resources, and a podcast that just started its fourth season.

And while those numbers are encouraging, they aren't the most meaningful metric. For me, what matters most is what those numbers represent: *engagement*. Not the kind that's measured in click-through rates or "likes"—though our social media community con-

tinues to grow—but the kind that shows up in inboxes every week in the form of feedback messages, like:

- "I've been burned out, and this email gave me hope."
- "Is there training available for lay leaders who are preaching for the first time?"
- "Thank you for naming something I've been wrestling with for a long time."

Ministry Forum isn't just a content platform; it's becoming a conversation partner. A reminder that ministry leaders—however scattered or stretched—are not alone.

We now average about 1,000 visitors a month to the Ministry Forum website. People are finding their way to our Resource Hub, checking out our webinars, sharing links with colleagues, Session, and presbyteries. We've seen a steady stream of interest in the kinds of tools and reflections that help leaders do ministry more thoughtfully—whether that's a resource to support rest, something to share with a Session, or an invitation to reflect more deeply. It's encouraging to see the breadth of topics people are connecting with.

One of our most recent emails highlighted toxic masculinity in the church—and this resonated with people who were refreshed to see this topic being discussed and wrestled with. Other pieces have highlighted intergenerational ministry, ordination, hybrid leadership, antiracism, burnout, spiritual care, and many more. Every time we hit "send" on one of those emails, we know we're going to hear back—not from everyone, but always from someone. Two responses, sometimes five, occasionally more. That rhythm of response has been steady and has been an encouragement to keep going.

Ministry is wildly diverse.

The leaders we serve are part-time, full-time, newly ordained, semi-retired, lay-preaching, tech-learning, sacrament-celebrating shepherds in contexts as varied as urban

congregations, rural parishes, long-term care homes, camp ministries and neighbourhood co-ops. We believe this is the beauty of God's *ekklesia*—diverse and dynamic, always changing, always becoming.

Ministry Forum has never aimed to be the source of all answers. We're not that. What we are is something like a crossroads—a space where questions can be asked out loud, where new paths are named, and where the wider community of leaders can share what they've learned along the way. As one person put it to me this past spring, "It's just good to know that someone's there to ask."

We're continuing to grow. The podcast is gathering listeners across the country—1,200+ downloads and counting. CHURCHx learning modules are expanding, and we're thrilled to be welcoming new voices to lead them. We're building new partnerships, deepening our passion to further the mission of Knox College, and imagining what the next few years could look like.

So, whether you've been with us from the first email, or you're just discovering Ministry Forum today—thank you. Keep reaching out. Keep asking questions. Keep showing up for your people and for this beautifully complicated church of ours.

You are not alone as you serve in ministry—we will keep walking with you!

Join Us in the Search for Our Next Minister

*Together, we listen for God's call
in this next chapter of ministry*

For more information contact:
the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Crawford at
j.crawford@standrewskw.com

**To learn more about St. Andrew's
check out our website at:**
standrewskw.com



Lead Minister

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Kitchener, Ont., is looking for a new Lead Minister. We are seeking an individual with the gifts and qualities that match our values of compassion, connection and community.

We are looking for inspirational leadership for:

- Our affirming congregation that bears witness to the inclusive grace of Jesus Christ through biblical preaching, inspiring music and outreach
- Our online streaming and tv ministry reaching via CTV and weekly on YouTube
- Our downtown Kitchener location, a community hub with partnerships supporting non-profit groups
- Our multi-staff, regional church, rooted in the reformed Presbyterian tradition



September 14 was “Rally Day” at Jubilee Presbyterian Church in Stayner, Ont., where nine people were welcomed into membership. Seen here (left to right) are: Rosannah Persuad, Sue Taconis, the Rev. Darren May, Janneke Leimgardt, Manfred Leimgardt, Pam Royal, Mel Irwin, Laurie Edes, Janneke Hollema and Patricia Kneeshaw (Clerk of Session). Missing is George Hollema.



Community Presbyterian Church in Almonte, Ont., recently began the New Beginnings process. Their coach is the Rev. Ian Fraser of Montreal, Que. Shown here are: Christian Fraser, pulpit supply; Interim Moderator the Rev. Milton Fraser; workshop leader Trevor Drummond; coach, the Rev. Ian Fraser; workshop leaders JoAnn Kerry, Marsha Guthrie and Susan McCuan-Harron.



On June 1, the congregation at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Amherstview, Ont., applied for a grant from Loyalist Township, which was supported by wind farm projects in the community. The congregation was blessed to have received a full grant of \$82,094 to replace the church's roof. Work started Aug. 25, and the project is now complete. God is good!

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Innisfail, Alta., participated in shared worship from June to August with the Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican and United Churches of Innisfail. This was the second summer that drew the four congregations together in worship, ministry and fellowship. Four years ago, St. Andrew's also started going to Camp Kannawin at the end of August for an open-air worship and communion service, followed by a Beef on a Bun luncheon. Over the years, they have invited other Presbyterian congregations to join them. Knox Presbyterian Church in Red Deer has joined each summer and provided a pianist for the worship service. This year, several other Presbyterian congregations joined in the celebrations. The Rev. Charles McNeil, interim moderator for St. Andrew's, led the congregation in worship. The Sunday offering was given to Camp Kannawin to support their ongoing ministry in Alberta.



On Sunday, Sept. 28, at Tweedsmuir Memorial Presbyterian Church in Orangeville, Ont., the congregation commemorated Truth and Reconciliation Sunday to remember Indigenous siblings who were harmed by our role in Indian Residential and Day Schools. The Rev. Bonnie Sutherland spoke of it during the children's story, and congregation members wore orange shirts to commemorate the day.



The congregation of St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Sunny Corner, N.B., celebrated 100 years of God's faithfulness on the weekend of August 16 and 17. On Saturday, the congregation held an open house with outdoor games and a barbecue, followed by a tour of the graveyard. The open house included almost 200 images and displays covering the last 100 years of worship and outreach. Featured were images of a Summer Bible School that had run from 1956 to 1969, organized by the Rev. Percy Sampson and, after his death, by his wife, Irene. During the peak years, enrolment reached over 250 people. As part of the 100th anniversary celebrations, a catered congregational banquet was held that Saturday evening. Sunday morning, the congregation dared to add a half hour to the worship service by starting at 10:30 a.m. Pastor Tom Ettinger challenged the congregation to consider "Who Will Pick Up the Mantle?" based on 2 Kings 2:1-14. Like any great church event, the celebrations concluded with food and fellowship. Pictured above are the Rev. Vernon Tozer, elder Joe Sheasgreen, the Rev. Blaine Dunnett, elder George Travis, pastor Ronda Bosch, the Rev. Kent Berdett, pastor Tom Ettinger, pastor Roger Estey.



On Sunday, Sept. 21, a *Welcome* luncheon was held for the Rev. Hannah Lovaglio—the new minister for Central Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont. Hannah comes from New Jersey (PC-USA) and is joined by her husband, Michael, and their two young sons. The delicious luncheon wasn't complete without a gift basket filled with an assortment of uniquely Canadian items for the family to enjoy. Induction by the presbytery will take place at a later date. Appreciation goes out to Interim Moderator the Rev. Phillip Wilson, who has provided thoughtful and caring leadership.



On July 27, 2025, Ian McKechnie, compiler and editor of *Recollections + Reflections: 150 Years of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*, presented a copy of the book to Ekaterina Alexakis, who oversaw its design and layout. The presentation was preceded by lunch in Lindsay, Ont. Copies of *Recollections + Reflections* can be purchased online at presbyterian.ca/resources.



Joyce Ingram (left) is pictured here with Kay Jamieson. Kay retired as Clerk of Session at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon, Ont., after 24 years! The congregation thanks Kay for her many years of service and wishes Joyce well in her new role.



As of May 31, the congregation at North Bramalea Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ont., hosts Family Games Night. There have been four events so far, on the last Friday of every month, with plans to keep enjoying the fun and fellowship this event offers.



Several women at North Bramalea Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ont., are continuing with their WoW (Women on Wellness) mission, established in the summer of 2024. They celebrated their first anniversary as a group on July 22.



Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon, Ont., has biannual clothing giveaways—spring and August—open to anyone. A large area was full of tables of clothing donations received for the event. Above are several volunteers who helped sort, organize and display clothing for the customers. Front row, left to right: Kay J., Margaret M., Ruth E., Ruth M., Debbie M. Back row: Gloria Jean M., Theresia R., Debbie L., Donna S., Barry S.



The Bible Study group at Knox Presbyterian Church in Bobcaygeon, Ont., is pictured here under the apple tree. The Rev. Ian Marnoch led the study. On the left side of the table are Ruth, Brian and Ellen. On the right are Kathleen, Shirley, Ian and Julie. Myra took the photo.



The second annual Blessing of the Animals service was held on Oct. 4 at North Bramalea Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ont., which hopefully means a new tradition has started. Three pets were in attendance, with an additional 15 represented by family members.



The Rev. Robert Hayashi, minister at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., was installed as the Moderator of the Oak Ridges Presbytery for the 2025–2026 year at the September meeting by the current Moderator, Dennis Mooney. Pictured (left to right): Clerk of Oak Ridges Presbytery, the Rev. Dr. Jeff Loach; last year's Moderator, Dennis Mooney; and the Rev. Robert Hayashi.



The Mission Committee of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Simcoe, Ont., organized a food donation drive for Thanksgiving. The food was delivered to Quetzal Family Homes in Simcoe.



On Oct. 19, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., joyfully welcomed five new members through Affirmation of Baptism and public Profession of Faith. Deborah Bassarath, Cindy Fowler, Andy Li, Indira Naidu and Bob Simpson affirmed their faith and commitment to Christ's church before the congregation. The service, filled with joyful hymns and heartfelt prayers, celebrated both the growth of the congregation and the new members' commitment to deepening their walk of faith within the church community. It was a morning of hope and renewal, reflecting on God's steadfast care and marking a day of gratitude and new beginnings for St. Andrew's Markham. Pictured (left to right) are Andy Li, Deborah Bassarath, Cindy Fowler, the Rev. Jim MacDonald, Indira Naidu and Bob Simpson.



The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History celebrated its 50th year with another successful conference. Among this year's many highlights, new CSPH president Robert Revington did a sit-down interview with former CTV News host (and *Presbyterian Record* columnist) Lloyd Robertson on Lloyd's life and Presbyterian background. Then, in the afternoon, the Rev. Dr. John Vissers chaired a panel on Stuart Macdonald's new book *Tradition and Tension: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1945–1985*, featuring esteemed church historians Phyllis Airhart (Emmanuel College), Alan Hayes (Wycliffe College) and Gordon L. Heath (McMaster Divinity College).



The Kemptville District Pastoral Care Committee presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Moira Anderson on July 27 in recognition of her many faithful years of ministry and musical leadership at the Kemptville District Hospital chapel and memorial services. The congregation at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Kemptville, Ont., has also been blessed with Moira's musical ministry for many decades and is grateful to her for sharing her time and talents in the church and within the Women's Missionary Society meetings. Pictured are the Rev. Samer Kandalafi and Moira Anderson plus the KDH Pastoral Care Committee, during Sunday service.



Campers lifted their voices in praise during the full-time, four-week summer camp held at London Korean Christian Church in London, Ont., last July. It was a precious time of sharing the love and gospel of Jesus with the local community.



Congregation members from Armour Heights Presbyterian Church visited the Indigenous Spirit Garden near Nathan Phillips Square in downtown Toronto, Ont. The trip was an opportunity to learn and share and is part of the church's commitment to responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.



Once again, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Kemptville, Ont., was greatly adorned for the Thanksgiving season by the talented Decorating Committee. The congregation and all visitors were uplifted by the joyful colours and sweet harvest, with hearts full of gratitude and generosity. Pictured here (left to right): the Rev. Samer Kandalaft, Leslie Claxton, Joanna Kandalaft, Colleen Dibb and Bea McHale.



The Gathering Place Presbyterian community in Port Colborne, Ont., is thankful again to farmers, traders and shoppers for their gifts to the city's food bank. Contributions this summer were matched by the Gathering Place, which (as of Sept. 30) meant 3,585 kilograms of fresh produce went to the Port Cares' Food Bank! This was shared by 650 local households; that is 1354 individuals, including 419 children and 284 seniors. The Gathering Place has set up links with some of the farms to carry on over the winter. Thanks to George McKibbin and his team for sustaining the market presence for a fifth summer!



Orange Shirt Day was recognized on Sept. 29 at Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont.



The Change Leadership Team/Special Commission held its first meeting in August. From left to right: Roberto DeSandoli (Saskatoon), In Kee Kim (Etobicoke), Cindy Stephenson (Calgary), Renee Yardley (Montreal), Maeve Forde (Waterloo), Debora Rolls (Peterborough), Yvonne Bearbull (Kenora), Heather Malnick (Bracebridge), Peter Kinch (Toronto), and on screen: Richard Topping (Vancouver) and Colin Conrad (Halifax).

For the last few years, the congregation at West Vancouver Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, B.C., has enjoyed their small "Knit and Knatter" group. To start off the new church year in September, it was decided that since some of the group do more chatting than knitting, the name changed to "The Chat Café." Women and men join Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m. for coffee, tea and treats. Some members have also joined from St. David's United Church, with whom West Vancouver PC shares worship during the summer. Pictured above are St. David's United Church members Doug DeVillier and Lynn McGillvray. Also in attendance every week is the new minister (since June 1), the Rev. Dr. Afonso Issa, a May graduate of the Vancouver School of Theology. More people are joining every week. The group's current project is to knit or crochet prayer shawls to donate to those in need.



From August 21 to 25, a group from Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., journeyed West for a time of fellowship and communion worship with members in Calgary, who take part in church services virtually.



The St. Andrew's Hall community gathered on Oct. 16 to celebrate 70 years of theological education, intentional Christian community and campus ministry at the University of British Columbia. Pictured (above left) at the 70th Anniversary Gala is the Rev. Ross Lockhart, Dean; the Rev. Dr. Andrew Stirling, Ambassador for the Canadian Bible Society, who was an event speaker; and the Rev. Rebecca Simpson, St. Andrew's Hall Assistant Dean. To the right are Presbyterian students. Also pictured is the Rev. Ross Lockhart with Larry Yen (second to left), St. Andrew's Hall Board member and elder at Vancouver Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, and guests.



**2026 Weekly Worship Bulletin
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Women from Armour Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., gathered with other Presbyterian women from across Ontario for the Cairn Family of Camps Women's Wellness Weekend, Sept. 19–21.



What a great start to the 11th year of offering PA Day Camps to the children in the community at First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, Ont.! On Oct. 20, the congregation hosted 15 campers, plus volunteers, in a fun day of crafts, games and activities. The church's Mission Project was in support of Loaves & Fishes, a local restaurant that serves free or low-cost meals to help those in need. The campers learned the biblical basis for Loaves and Fishes (the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000) and how Loaves & Fishes works with other service agencies in Brockville to ensure that nutritious food is available to all. The campers brought food donations to help support this important work.



A tradition at North Bramalea Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ont., is the annual Fall Round-Up, which celebrates the congregation's return to regular worship after summer holidays. Even the youngest adherent helped with the festivities! Good food, fun and fellowship was enjoyed by many.



On Friday, Sept. 26, the Rev. Robert Hayashi and Imre Oláh hosted 35 new cadets for the York Regional Police Places of Worship Tour at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., where they experienced the pipe organ and learned about the Christian faith. Pictured (above right) are the 35 new police cadets and the Rev. Robert Hayashi. Also pictured is Imre Oláh, RHPC Music Director and Organist, speaking to the cadets.



The Prayer Partnership group at North Bramalea Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ont., celebrated their first anniversary by assisting in the July 13 worship service.



On Saturday, Sept. 20, the Mission and Outreach Committee at Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church (RHPC) in Richmond Hill, Ont., hosted a community pancake breakfast, while the Christian Education Committee held a car wash. Joining forces on this beautiful day made the fundraising event productive and enjoyable. Proceeds went to the PWS&D initiative in Gaza, the RHPC Capital Fund and the RHPC general account.



On Sept. 27, volunteers from Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church in Richmond Hill, Ont., participated in a Community Cleanup on Yonge Street near the church, at the invitation of TERA, a student-led environmental organization dedicated to hosting cleanups and workshops to cherish and protect the natural world. The team removed over 29 kilograms of trash from Yonge Street! Pictured are several of the student and church volunteers. Also pictured are the Rev. Robert Hayashi and Deborah Campbell, convener of the Finance & Maintenance Committee, with students.



The Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry marked the 150th anniversary of the PCC with a special worship service held on Oct. 26 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Morrisburg, Ont., which is also celebrating 150 years of worship and ministry. Guest preacher the Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald, Professor of Church and Society (retired), gave the message, reminding us that through good times and difficult ones, God walked with people of faith, including those whose efforts created the PCC, and that God still walks with us today. Dr. Macdonald then concluded the service, which included favourite hymns and prayers of the past, with his guitar and a contemporary song of praise, "I'll Not be Shaken." Following the service, a time of refreshments and fellowship was held in the Church Hall. Thanks to everyone who helped to organize the service and who took part, as we look forward to the future, knowing God still walks with us! PHOTO CREDITS: DAVID MCILVEEN

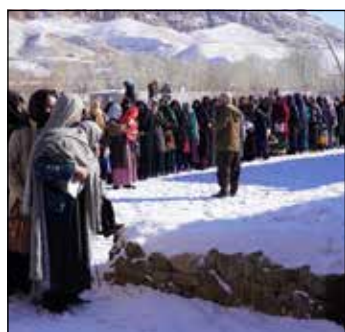
PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

Our Calling in Turbulent Times

By Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Director

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” Luke 4:18–19.

When Jesus read this passage in the synagogue, he closed by saying that this scripture was being fulfilled. As Jesus’ followers, many wonder “What would Jesus do?” when faced with life’s challenges. Answers can be found in this passage. Essentially, Jesus seeks freedom for those oppressed by the systems that keep them in poverty, struggling to find shelter and food. He is calling for those in power to care for the marginalized.



PWS&D’s partner in Afghanistan helps marginalized families in Bamyán province access food during the harsh winter months.

We should seek the same and celebrate initiatives that aim to redistribute wealth (even through taxes), so that all can have access to sufficient food, health care services, affordable housing and education.

Jesus also called us to welcome the stranger.

This has been a difficult year for the majority of the world that lives in poverty. The drastic and sudden cuts to aid, led by the United States, are resulting in rapidly increasing numbers of people facing sicknesses that could easily be prevented. Millions more are facing starvation in places where previously they could rely on international solidarity to help them get through extremely challenging times. These sudden cuts, which reflect 40% of the global budget for international aid, will have an impact that is beyond belief. This goes counter to Jesus’ teachings.

Without denying the domestic challenges of our time, it is also true that there are many places in the world that are hurting more deeply than Canada. We must remember these places as Canada maneuvers through its own social and economic crises. Cutting aid is not the solution. We pray that Canada, and Canadians, will continue to value international cooperation and aid as part of our shared identity and duty,

not as something to be compromised out of self-interest.

Looking back at 2025, there are several initiatives from PWS&D that I’d like to share to illustrate how PWS&D reaches out to the oppressed. These initiatives are evidence of our commitment to fulfill the scripture that Jesus shared.

At this time last year, PWS&D was engaged in a food assistance project in Bamyán, a mountainous and cold region of Afghanistan. Hundreds of families were helped to get through the winter. This included helping mothers who lost their husbands to Covid or other causes. Under the Taliban, opportunities for these women to earn a living are strictly limited, as is access to education and health care. This year we will again assist families in dire straits in Afghanistan. We are thankful for the support from other churches at Canadian Foodgrains Bank, as well as from the Canadian government, which enables PWS&D to scale up the reach of the project significantly.

This year, we also assisted people affected by earthquakes that hit Afghanistan and drastic floods in Pakistan. We were able to provide food assistance, thanks to the presence and commitment of our local partner.

PWS&D has made sizeable

contributions to assist people in desperate situations in places like Somalia and Haiti, where therapeutic nutritional attention is given to children who are severely malnourished and without which they would likely die.

PWS&D continues to support maternal health programs in Malawi, where cuts from USAID have hit health services dramatically. Many clinics were forced to close, and many health workers lost their jobs due to these cuts. Pregnant women are more likely to die when giving birth, and infants are more likely not to see their first birthdays without the accompaniment of health workers.

Services and treatments for people living with HIV and AIDS have also experienced serious cuts, increasing the risk of transmission and propagation of the virus. PWS&D continues to work with hospitals in Malawi at a time when our support and partnership is more essential than ever before.

Over the summer, PWS&D issued an appeal for Gaza that helped to raise resources to enable partners to respond in the most challenging of circumstances. With the recent ceasefire, we hope that humanitarian assistance to people in Gaza will be unhindered and that the reconstruction of



Jean Charles Kervens, pictured with his mother, was admitted to the malnutrition treatment program in Haiti. The one-year-old is now in full recovery. PHOTO CREDIT: PARTNERS IN HEALTH HAITI.

this devastated corner of the world can give a new beginning to those left behind.

Finally, even as the Canadian government is reducing the number of refugees who can be sponsored to Canada, PWS&D is encouraging churches to continue to sponsor refugees and has set up a special fund to support churches that might not have the financial means to do so. Jesus and his parents were refugees too, when they fled to Egypt to escape persecution from King Herod. History seems to repeat itself as we witness the persecution of migrants in so many places around the world.

During this Advent season, we hope that you will continue to answer the call for support ever more generously and that you will pray for the oppressed so that they can find freedom from want.

Lower Newton Growing Project

Contributed by John Barrett,
Life and Mission Agency

Through Growing Projects as well as Grow Hope initiatives, which link urban and rural congregations together, PWS&D supporters across Canada are helping to ensure people have reliable access to nutritious food.

A supportive crowd of invited guests, volunteers and project partners gathered on August 8

in Lower Newton, P.E.I., as the harvest of this year’s grain crop was about to begin. They were on site at a growing project—an initiative through which local farmers donate a portion of their land to be farmed, and the proceeds from the harvest support food security and food assistance programs through Canadian Foodgrains Bank. The financial proceeds from the grain may be multiplied up to four times, with matching funds



Celebrating the harvest of the growing project of Lower Newton Canadian Foodgrains Bank are (left to right): Kent Myers, P.E.I. Representative for CFGB; John Barrett, Associate Secretary for Congregational & Community Ministries of the PCC; Wendy Anderson, Atlantic Canada Regional Representative for CFGB; the Hon. Darlene Compton, provincial Minister of Economic Development, Innovation & Trade; and Kent MacDonald, member of Parliament for the federal district of Cardigan.

from the Canadian government.

At the event in Lower Newton, a time of celebration and refreshment was held as the massive combines worked in the background, turning strands of grain into much needed

kernels of hope. Thanks were extended to the Visser family for their hard work in planting, maintaining and harvesting this abundance of grain. Members of the Zion Presbyterian Church Mission Commit-

tee were acknowledged along with those attending from the Christian Reformed Church. This project is a shining example of cooperation, ecumenical partnership and a true desire to feed those in need.

PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

No Emergency Too Small



In Zimbabwe, below-average rainfall has led to widespread food insecurity. The ACT Rapid Response Fund distributed food and hygiene items and provided psychosocial support.

By Stephanie Chunoo,
PWS&D Communications

Headlines often focus on the world's most significant disasters, but what happens to the smaller emergencies that rarely make the news, receive limited coverage or are under the shadow of bigger emergencies?

These "smaller" emergencies still leave families facing devastating circumstances. Floods, droughts, earthquakes and disasters triggered by

climate change continue to disrupt people's lives in communities around the globe. Unfortunately, without constant media attention, these emergencies often go under-supported, sometimes leading to inadequate responses when help is needed most.

Through ACT Alliance's Global Rapid Response Fund (RRF), PWS&D and other ACT members respond to these often-overlooked crises, ensuring families receive life-saving support. The RRF, administered by the ACT Secretariat, is a global fund that empowers local members to initiate first responses in emergencies directly and swiftly. It serves as a crucial tool for addressing small- and medium-scale sudden-onset emergencies.

Emergencies reached through the RRF

In 2024, there were 21 RRF responses—10 in Asia, seven in Africa and four in Latin America and the Caribbean. Over

120,000 people were reached with a range of assistance.

In Kambia, Northern Sierra Leone, where climate-induced flooding struck, displacing 50 communities and causing significant property loss, 434 households received cash assistance and disaster risk reduction training, which was implemented by ACT's local partner Council of Churches in Sierra Leone.

When Venezuelan migrants leave their homes due to economic collapse, many head to Panama, which means they pass through the Darién Gap—one of the most perilous migration routes in the world that rests on the border between Colombia and Panama. Dense jungle, treacherous rivers, dangerous wildlife and the constant threat of robbery or violence mark the journey through the rainforest. Many pass through towns like Turbo, Necoclí and Acandí, where ports are heavily controlled and people end up living in

tents. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable, either due to the lack of guardianship or because families have exhausted their resources. Local ACT member Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Colombia's response addresses basic lifesaving needs of migrants temporarily staying near the Gulf of Urabá while they raise enough funds to make the crossing to Panama.

After six typhoons hit the Philippines within just one month—two of which were classified as super typhoons—the destruction was immense. These storms alone displaced over 617,000 people from their homes. Major roads and seaports had to close and evacuation centres in the affected regions were completely overwhelmed. The National Council of Churches in the Philippines was able to institute an immediate response through the RRF, including food distribution and cash assistance to 2,500 households



Flash floods in Baghlan province, Afghanistan, affected over 3,000 households. Families received cash assistance for recovery through the ACT Rapid Response Fund.

and 750 families.

These cases highlight just a portion of the emergencies where PWS&D, through the RRF and local implementing partners, make a difference.

Every emergency, regardless of its size, has a massive impact on families and communities. The ACT Alliance Global Rapid Response Fund provides PWS&D with a vehicle to respond to all types of emergencies that require immediate support.

Coming Together for the Giving Tree



Christine and Lynda, PWS&D Champions at Chedoke Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ont., shared how their congregation blesses others through the Giving Tree.

By Emma Goldstein,
PWS&D Communications

The Giving Tree has become an annual tradition for many congregations. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the

Gifts of Change catalogue is found in the hands of Presbyterians from coast to coast. This resource highlights local and international PWS&D and PCC projects that one can give to, such as supplying seeds for a family's household garden, providing training for a mothers' group to make menstrual products for school girls, or buying a sewing machine for a marginalized young person. The Giving Tree also includes Christmas tree ornaments to hang up in a creative display within a church.

Chedoke Presbyterian Church has set up the Giving Tree, along with other local initiatives, over the past number of years. Last year, this Hamilton, Ont., church fundraised toward one common gift—for Nepal. "PWS&D Director Guy Smagge had just come to speak about Nepal," said

Christine Vizzari, one of the co-Champions at the church, "so we focused on a project there."

Chedoke's mission committee highlighted the initiative to the congregation during Sunday services, but most important to engaging their community was having someone in the lobby each week to answer questions. "The question we got asked the most was 'what is this?'," said Lynda Pollock, another co-Champion.

A member of the congregation made a felt tree to hang in the narthex. Whenever someone donated to the Nepal project, they got to place an ornament on the tree—something the congregation found both fun and inspiring as the tree filled with ornaments.

The Giving Tree is a great opportunity to share stories about the work of PWS&D with

those in your congregation who have not yet heard about the difference the church is making for people in difficult situations around the world. "When people feel connected with those the gifts are supporting, it motivates them," Christine said. She also emphasizes the importance of understanding what they are giving to: "Churches can also make use of the opportunity to bring people in from PWS&D to talk about the work."

Christine wants other congregations to know that if they are considering setting up the Giving Tree, that "anyone can give any amount." For example, many children in their congregation enjoyed contributing a dollar and putting their name on an ornament for the tree. Further, it is an accessible way for volunteers to get involved. "It's a fairly simple project for

a church to take on and volunteers of any ability can help," said Lynda. Whether making and setting up the tree, sitting at a table to engage curious community members in conversation about the work of PWS&D, or giving to a project, it's a great way to make a difference.

"If you can open up the opportunity to give for most people," the pair summarized, "that feels really good."

To learn more about the Giving Tree, visit presbyterian.ca/givingtree.



PRESBYTERIAN WORLD SERVICE & DEVELOPMENT

The State of Refugee Sponsorship

By Biniam Goitom, PWS&D
Refugee Program Coordinator

Since late 2024 and through 2025, refugee sponsorship in Canada has been defined by significant government pauses on new applications for private sponsorship. While existing applications continue to be processed and some pathways remain open, specifically through Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) organizations like The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the halt has caused distress among potential sponsors and refugee advocates.

Temporary pauses on new applications

As of November 29, 2024, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) temporarily stopped accepting new applications for the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program from Group of 5 and Community Sponsorship channels. Applications submitted before the pause are not affected and continue to be processed. The pause is scheduled to last until December 31, 2025.

Open sponsorship pathways

As part of the changes implemented by IRCC, the annual allocation given to each SAH organization has been reduced by around 20% for the year 2025. The PCC has experienced a 29% reduction, going from an allocation of 81 spots to 58.

Other open sponsorship pathways include the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program. This program matches refugees identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with private sponsors in Canada. For these cases, the government and sponsors share financial costs. While these cases do not fall under the allocation numbers, potential sponsors should apply through SAH organizations to sponsor under the BVOR program.

Sponsorship Agreement Holder organizations are encouraging potential sponsors to look at sponsorships for government-identified refugees through the BVOR program, rather than sponsor named refugees. PWS&D also

has financial assistance available for sponsors who might be interested in the BVOR program, but where cost is a factor.

The pause and cuts to overall refugee levels have significantly reduced the number of refugees that can be privately sponsored. This comes despite a high level of public interest in sponsorship. This has left many Canadians unable to move forward with applications they had spent months preparing, forcing them to deliver disappointing news to refugee families.

Reasons for the overall cuts to refugee sponsorship levels

The reason provided by the Canadian government for its decision to pause certain refugee sponsorship applications and cut overall immigration levels in 2024 and 2025 is primarily to manage large backlogs and address public concerns about pressure on housing and social services. These policy shifts follow a record increase in newcomers and a change in public opinion



A family sponsored by Unionville Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., who arrived in Canada on September 8, 2025.

on immigration levels. The number of refugees being admitted to Canada is already very low compared to most countries.

By focusing on the existing backlog, IRCC's goal is to achieve shorter and more predictable processing times for the tens of thousands of applications already in the system. This helps IRCC better manage its workload and align with the private sponsorship targets outlined in the 2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan.

High immigration and population growth in recent years have also intensified pressure on Canada's housing supply, infrastructure and social services, including health care. The government stated that

stabilizing population growth is necessary to ease these pressures. However, when compared with overall immigration levels, refugee sponsorship, as a total share of all pathways, is still insignificant. Above all, we know that Canada is made stronger by the diverse voices that immigration brings to the country.

The current climate for refugee sponsorship is restrictive due to the temporary pauses on new applications. IRCC needs to revise the overall cuts and consider how small refugee sponsorship is to total immigration levels.

To learn more about the refugee sponsorship program, visit WeRespond.ca/refugee-sponsorship.

Another Successful Journey for Hope

By Emma Goldstein,
PWS&D Communications

As the trees begin dropping their leaves and children pack their backpacks for the first few weeks of school, there's another tradition that marks autumn: the Journey for Hope. The Journey for Hope is ultimately about partnership—people from across Canada working together to plan local events, through which they raise funds toward the church's work to ensure marginalized families in places like Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gaza, Guatemala, Malawi, Nepal, Pakistan and Sudan have reliable access to nutritious food.

This September, 12 teams participated in the annual fundraiser. Now in its fourth year,

participants have raised over \$26,000 in support of food security, a sum that will go even further thanks to matching funds accessed through Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Together in Motion and Song, a team from Victoria, B.C., organized a hymn sing on September 18, followed by a walkathon. Patti Jackson, the team's captain, said, "Our hymn sing at Trinity Presbyterian Church began with a prayer from the Interim Moderator, then a hymn selected by our pianist, 'How Great Thou Art.' We followed that with hymn selections by the audience. Interspersed between songs, we shared impact stories from PWS&D and Gifts of Change and offered prayers for world peace. Afterward, we shared

goodies and fellowship. Cyclists and two pups joined our Saturday walk around the beautiful Esquimalt Gorge Park. We had folks from many churches: Knox Sooke, Knox Victoria, St. Andrew's, Trinity and Saanich Peninsula, as well as a visitor from New Brunswick! We all

agreed working together as a group brings us all closer together as we try to make a difference for our global family."

The Journey for Hope is just one way you can get involved to support PWS&D's work. Keep the conversation going by hosting a PWS&D speaker

at your Sunday morning worship service or consider becoming a PWS&D Champion. Learn more at WeRespond.ca/get-involved.

If you have stories or photos from this year's Journey for Hope, please email them to egoldstein@presbyterian.ca.



Joining for their first year, the Doon Dreamers team from Kitchener, Ont., had an overwhelming turnout of people passionate to support PWS&D's work.

INTERNATIONAL

Experiencing Cuba

*Provided by Lily Ko,
International Ministries*

In April 2025, 10 members of St. Timothy Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Ont., travelled to Cuba to visit PCC partners the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba and Evangelical Seminary of Theology to witness and learn about current realities. The following are condensed and lightly edited highlights from the trip by three participants.

Alan's reflection

Most people visiting Cuba plan their trip to experience the leisurely life and culture of this Caribbean Island. Our trip, however, provided us the unique opportunity to witness and experience life beyond the tourist lens and see what local Cubans face. Our interactions with local people, leaders and other community members helped us comprehend first-hand the dire economic, social and political situations. Cubans struggle with access to food; and medicines and pharmacy products are scarce. As well as frequent electricity blackouts, clean drinking water is insufficient. And many Cubans, especially those of working age, are leaving—creating an economic calamity.

We heard and witnessed

hopelessness, but the people of Cuba also embody strong qualities of pride, resilience and even glimmers of hope.

We visited two seminaries and saw how dedicated leaders and theological students turn to God and communicate hope to their community. We spent time understanding projects like Weavers of Hope, where eight women are employed to take raw materials such as yarn and thread to make assorted clothing products. The finances raised from these sales go to support underserved women and their families.

We witnessed the important role of local churches. They often provide basic needs, such as meals and other essential food programs, clean drinking water, medicines, educational and collaborative learning programs, and establish communities where seniors can gather and fellowship together, to name just a few.

We saw that, even in the darkness, God shines a light for God's people. Our group had the opportunity to witness God's resilience, hope and love in Cuba, and that God's light and hope for this country is strong.

Grace's reflection

"The situation is the worst it's

ever been, and we don't know if it's going to get better."

That was something we heard everywhere we went. Cuba is at a point in time where they're trying to figure out how to move forward in this new reality of yet another crisis. USA embargoes, disintegrated currency, disassociated government—no direction, no leadership.

The country's desire is to be independent, but it has faced crisis after crisis. In the future, historians might come up with a name for this current period, but for now, it's hard times. So hard that it's shaking people to the core. They're trying to survive on less and less.

In the midst of a mass exodus, seniors and young children (the most vulnerable) remain. For some families, the separation is meant to be temporary, while others are leaving permanently. Those who go are usually young, educated and exactly the people society depends on to build the country. You cannot fault their choice.

On our trip we met pastors, students, educators, community workers and congregation members and were guided by our amazing translator, Yosmel. Through them, we saw faithful resilience, ingenuity and fight. They are very aware



Matanzas, Cuba.

of how dire their situation is.

Our hosts opened their world to us and honestly shared their struggles. At the Matanzas Seminary and in local churches, pastors and staff acknowledged that it is difficult for them, but they told us that they strive to provide hope and demonstrate strength.

The churches are very attuned to their communities' needs. They have responded by running social programs, such as providing lunches, medical dispensaries, a daycare and discussion groups. They also create their own source of income by selling crafts, building facilities for visitors to rent, and renting out buses, among other things. The pastor at Luyanó Presbyterian Church stressed to us that it is important for them to have their own resources to help, not just rely on external sponsorships.

In the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." In Cuba, that prayer became real as I could see the possibilities of what coming together as one body in Cuba could look like. Our new friends told us how meaningful it was to have us witness and understand their reality—for them to be seen. We are all connected in spirit and bound by God's love.

Mission doesn't have to be about conversion, and it doesn't have to be one-sided. Maybe we can re-envision mission to be about showing up, listening, becoming attuned to needs, and partnering with communities to heal and build together in solidarity.

Also, mission could be fun. Every day was a gift to learn more about Cuba. It was great to get to know our guide and group members better and to have lots of laughs. This trip was filled with joy, as it felt like

it was the beginning of something new.

John's reflection

Is it possible to fall in love with a country and with a group of strangers after only eight days? I would not have thought so, but we did. We fell in love with Cuba and with the many people we met. We fell in love with their warmth and generosity. We grew to admire and respect the dignity they hold within themselves and for each other. We saw the pride they had in being Cuban, although that sense of pride is quickly diminishing. It diminishes with each person who decides to leave Cuba because the socio-economic condition is unsustainable, and they realize that this is the worst it's ever been.

The average Cuban lives without enough food and their daily lives are punctuated by extended blackouts, sometimes for more than 20 hours per day. Yes, we experienced the daily blackouts and yes, it was inconvenient, but we also knew that this was a temporary experience for us until we returned home. For those who remain, this is a daily struggle.

When we asked our translator and guide what the next five years look like for Cuba, he responded by saying he doesn't know what next week will look like, let alone the next few years.

When we asked the principal of the seminary how the seminary students will teach and preach when they graduate and start their ministries, he confided that this is the main challenge that awaits future pastors. How can they minister to their people and speak about the love of God when their church members are hungry? How can they preach



Members of the trip to Cuba at Matanzas Seminary.

INTERNATIONAL

the good news of Jesus when many members of their community have left Cuba to find work, with the hopes of sending money back home? How can they lead their congregations in worship when many people in Cuba feel that God has abandoned them?

It broke our hearts to hear of such things.

As we heard many stories of the difficult reality most people in Cuba live with, we were told on more than one occasion that the 10 of us visiting to be in solidarity with them gave them hope because it made them feel like they were not forgotten.

During our nightly debrief sessions, the 10 of us spoke about what it means to have hope. What is that fine line between being hopeful and hopeless? What did Paul mean in Romans when he said, "Hope against hope"?

We understood why the people of Cuba were growing more hopeless when faced with material shortages, but why did the Rev. In Kee Kim preach about hope a few Sundays ago to those of us at St. Timothy, living very comfortably in Canada, where our issue is not having too little but having too much? Many of us have sought a comfortable, relatively worry-free life. We have that now. We're so comfortable that it's starting to feel uncomfortable. So, is hope contingent on having our basic needs met, or rather, is hope a spiritual state of being, like the Rev. Kim reminded us? We discussed and reflected on such matters during our time in Cuba.

We saw hope in Ortiz, the patient and persistent gardener for the seminary. We saw the literal fruits of his labour when he turned seven acres

of overgrown weeds into a thriving vegetable garden full of herbs, sweet potatoes, peppers, squash, and more. It was enough to feed those inside the seminary but also enough to share with a few people and businesses in the surrounding neighbourhood.

We saw hope in the Montessori school in the church at Guanabacoa, where 40 children are loved and cared for. We saw hope in the renovations that the church is making to add space for 20 more kids. And we hope that they will be able to eventually meet the needs of the more than 120 other children in the neighbourhood who are on the waiting list.

We witnessed hope in the



Guanabacoa Presbyterian Church.

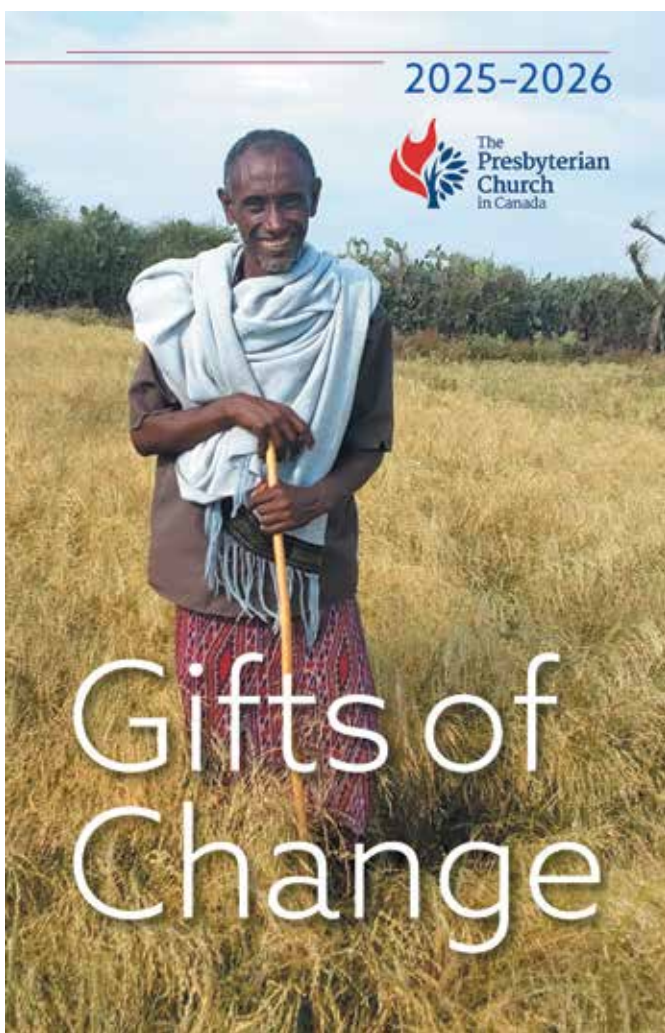
churches that, despite having lost many of their members to emigration, have found ways to be the central and critical sanctuary for their communities, whether it's by providing clean, fresh drinking water for the community, or by being the

main centre for essential social and spiritual services for everyone who walks into their buildings.

As we hope for Cuba, we continue to pray for them also. We hope you will pray for them, too.

To support the people of Cuba, donate to The Presbyterian Church in Canada "Building Hope Together in Cuba" program. Visit presbyterian.ca/donate-cuba.

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Together, we are making a difference.



Reflections from “I Love Taiwan”



Lugu Summer Camp.

For many years, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has participated in the “I Love Taiwan” (ILT) program of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). The “I Love Taiwan” mission is one of the most important ecumenical youth projects of the PCT Youth Ministry Committee. Each year, this program invites youth and young adults from ecumenical partner churches around the world to join the summer ministry at local churches in Taiwan.

Supported by Presbyterians Sharing, Valerie Lin from Celebration Presbyterian Church in Markham, Ont., and Christopher Sankarlal from University Community Church in Windsor, Ont., participated in 2025 and shared their experiences.

Serving in a Mountain Town with Heart

By Valerie Lin

This past July, I had the incredible opportunity to serve in the “I Love Taiwan” mission trip, hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Interestingly, I discovered this mission opportunity through my dad, who spotted an email from The Presbyterian Church in Canada in his inbox about the upcoming trip. I had never been on a mission trip before and had

just graduated university with a free July this summer. It felt like God’s calling to serve and witness his work in a new country.

The mission trip was titled “Formosa’s Voice,” a phrase that initially puzzled me. On our first day, local Taiwanese leaders explained that “Formosa” was the name given by Portuguese settlers when they first arrived in Taiwan, meaning “beautiful.” This name reflects the island’s natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. More important, it became a recurring metaphor throughout our trip: discerning the “voice” or calling God had in our respective local churches.

My journey began in Tamsui, a coastal city in northern Taiwan, where we met other mission candidates from around the world. We stayed at a local hostel and held orientation sessions at the historic Tamsui Presbyterian Church, founded by Canadian missionary the Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay. It was inspiring to see how he shared God’s love through his genuine integration into the local culture, and his efforts to introduce dental care and establish educational institutions, setting a powerful example of faithful and respectful service.

During orientation, we connected with candidates from Korea, Japan, USA, New Zealand and Costa Rica. Our group bonded over cultural exchanges and sharing Canadian treats like maple candies. I was espe-



Valerie and camper Sarah.

cially moved to learn about the Presbyterian Church’s strong involvement in championing Taiwan’s Indigenous communities, including being a vital advocate in preserving Indigenous language and culture.

After orientation, I was assigned to serve at Lugu Church, a church located in Lugu, a small mountain town in central Taiwan, whose name means “Deer Valley.” The congregation consisted of around 100 members and services were held in Taiwanese to better serve the local community.

My primary role in Lugu was to assist with the church’s children’s summer camp, hosting about 25 campers with the help of 13 counsellors over three days. Many of the campers came from farming families and had limited exposure to English or other cultures, and some were not Christian. The camp became an incredible opportunity to share the Gospel in practical ways and provide opportunities for children to exercise their English skills through games, worship songs, arts and crafts, and skits based on Bible stories.

During my time serving at the summer camp in Lugu, I was reminded of Psalm 42:1. “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.” Whether it was through the counsellors’ immense dedication in preparing for the camp or the campers’ attentiveness during worship, everyone at Lugu showed a deep longing for God’s love, a thirst that transcended language and culture. Despite the language barrier,

I also formed a special bond with one camper named Sarah. We communicated mostly through smiles and gestures, yet by the end of the camp, she was moved to tears when I was leaving. I gave her my contact information, and we’ve stayed in touch since. These moments reminded me that faith is most powerfully expressed not by telling people we are Christians, but by living in a way that reflects God’s love through how we serve, care and connect with others.

Beyond the camp, I had the privilege of learning about Lugu’s tea culture from members of Lugu church. I participated in a traditional Lugu tea ceremony, which is 16 steps long, and the meticulous process of picking and making green tea.

From my dad’s timely email to my readiness to say yes, I saw God’s hand guiding me to a place where I could grow, serve and experience God’s love in action.

The mission expanded my worldview of what it means to be a Christian: it deepened my faith and blessed me with meaningful relationships that cross languages and cultures. It was a privilege to contribute to the vibrant community of Lugu church, support the children’s summer camp and learn from the rich heritage of Taiwan’s Presbyterian Church and Indigenous people.

Something New and Exciting

By Christopher Sankarlal

From July 1 to July 17, I participated in the “I Love Taiwan” mission trip, a cultural and faith-based volunteer program hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in partnership with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The experience was not only a journey across the world, but also a journey of cultural immersion and spiritual connection. Over the course of two weeks, I had the opportunity to meet volunteers from around the world,



Lugu Camp youth and their pastor.



Dinner with Eastgate Presbyterian Church elders and pastors.

serve the local community in Taipei, and gain a deeper understanding of Taiwan's culture, history and the lasting impact of missionary work in the region.

Our orientation began in Taipei, a historic coastal district known for its scenic sunsets, night markets and deep Presbyterian roots. Orientation was designed to help participants acclimate to the culture, language and one another. On our first day, we were split into teams for a scavenger hunt around Tamsui. The challenge encouraged us to interact with locals, navigate the busy streets, and learn to order food in Mandarin from the night market vendors, which was a memorable and often humorous experience. That evening, we reflected on the importance of communication, humility and openness when entering a new cultural space.

On the second day, we toured several historic landmarks built by George Leslie Mackay, a Canadian missionary who first introduced Christianity to Taiwan in the late 19th century. We visited the original church and schools he founded, learning about his influence on both religion and education in the area. It was deeply interesting to see how the efforts of a fellow Canadian had left such a lasting legacy across the Pacific, and

it provided a meaningful historical context for our own work as volunteers.

By the third day, we were ready to begin our mission assignments. Participants were divided into groups and sent to different parts of Taiwan, from urban Taipei in the north to rural communities in the south. Each team would partner with a local Presbyterian church to assist with their ongoing outreach programs. I was assigned to Taipei, the nation's capital, to volunteer at a summer camp hosted by Eastgate Presbyterian Church in the Da'an District of the city.

The summer camp in Taipei was one of the most rewarding parts of the trip. The program welcomed children from across Taiwan, including those from impoverished or remote regions, such as Hualien. The church provided accommodations for them throughout the week, giving them a safe space to learn, play, and grow in faith.

Each day of camp began with lively morning songs, led by both local and international volunteers, myself included. This was followed by a history lesson, creatively delivered through a play performed by the local volunteers. Afterward, we discussed how the lessons from history connected to biblical teachings, helping the children draw moral and spiritual

lessons from the stories. As a way for them to practice the English skills that they learned in school, I would teach them different phrases and speak with the kids in English, as it was something they enjoyed.

Every day brought something new and exciting. One day, we learned how to make balloon animals, which quickly became a favourite among the kids. Another day featured a karate lesson taught by a local martial arts master, who not only demonstrated techniques but also emphasized discipline and respect. We also hosted a board game day, where a local board game café company brought various new and exciting games for all the kids to try. Laughter filled the room in each of these little sessions. Through these activities, we formed meaningful bonds with the children and learned as much from them as they did from us.

During this time, we also heard updates from other ILT volunteers stationed in southern Taiwan. They were experiencing heavy rainfall and flooding from an approaching typhoon, which added a sense of unity and shared concern across all the teams. It reminded us that service sometimes means adapting and staying strong even in difficult conditions.

After a fulfilling week in Taipei, our teams regrouped at the Presbyterian Bible Camp in Hsinchu. The reunion allowed everyone to reconnect

and share stories from their respective regions. We listened to accounts of resilience, creativity and cultural exchange, each experience unique yet tied by a common goal of serving. Evenings were spent playing card games, sharing laughter, and reflecting on how much we had all grown during our time in Taiwan.

One of the highlights of the trip was the Cultural Exchange Night, where each group gave a presentation about their home country. My team's presentation on Canada included discussions about our diverse culture, natural landscapes, and a mini French lesson. In turn, we learned about countries such as Korea, Japan, New Zealand and Costa Rica from other participants. That night was a celebration of global fellowship and a reminder that faith and friendship transcend borders and languages.

As the trip came to a close, we said our goodbyes at the airport on July 17th. Though our time in Taiwan was brief,

it was profoundly impactful. I left with a greater appreciation for cultural exchange and the power of service rooted in compassion for one another. The experience broadened my global perspective and gave me friends from all parts of the world.

I Love Taiwan was a journey of understanding, humility and gratitude. From navigating night markets and learning Mandarin in Tamsui to serving locals in Taipei, every moment contributed to something that will stay with me for years to come. I would do it all over again.



Christopher (right) on the last day of summer camp, with a pastor from Eastgate Presbyterian Church (centre) and another ILT participant.



Making balloon animals with local summer camp volunteers.





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Starpoint Youth Festival in Hungary

Two young adults represented the PCC at a large international youth festival organized biennially since 2003 by the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH). The RCH is the largest Protestant denomination in Hungary and a PCC church partner. Twenty-eight international delegates attended this year's festival. Robyn Ahn and Sophia Kim took part in July with support from Presbyterians Sharing. They share reflections on their experience below.



The group of international representatives at Starpoint Youth Festival in Hungary.

Potent Moments of Spiritual Connection

By Sophia Kim

When I was invited to attend the Starpoint Youth Festival in Hungary, I was completing my second-last semester of my undergraduate degree. During this period, it felt as though my life was not moving through the spirit. Instead, stress and anxiety fuelled me. My faith journey seemed to be dragging along, often sitting on the back burner in the dark. The invitation to travel abroad was enticing and exciting, but my mental state at the time could not make room for hope. However, as with most things in life, my expectations and assumptions were inept at predicting my future.

The gruelling semester eventually came to an end, and I found myself on a plane heading to Budapest with fellow young adult, Robyn Ahn. Robyn and I were to attend the Starpoint Youth Festival together as PCC representatives. Soon enough, we landed in Budapest, and made our way to our accommodations before heading to the festival. As someone who has only travelled to my home country of South Korea, the mere act of wandering through the streets of Hungary was fascinating. Everything was new and intriguing. Once again, I reminded myself that my Korean Canadian perspective is not the centre of the world, and

that richness and beauty exist far beyond my periphery.

At the accommodations, we met young adults from across the world and journeyed with them to Zánka, the village where the festival would be held. The friendliness and sincerity of my fellow international representatives put me at ease, and I found myself opening to these strangers. We bonded quickly, discovering that the friendships found in the most unexpected and foreign places are often the most memorable and inspiring.

The first night of the festival, we sat together as the "International Group" among a sea of more than 3,000 youth and worshipped together. It was overwhelming and pushed me out of the familiarity of my small-church context. Through a little earpiece for English translation, I heard glimmers of hope and community. I couldn't understand everything, but I felt the depth of their intention.

The theme of the festival was "Breathe," and it aimed to reach young people struggling with anxiety. I was surprised by the festival's desire to confront the massive topic of mental health. During worship, I heard vulnerable stories of pain and strife, and redemption and healing. The speakers taught me that salvation is never linear or uniform, but unique and curated to each context. They taught me to never take my position as a young resident of Canada for granted, and to recognize the privilege of being an active witness.

And yet, it would be a lie to

claim that the theology from the festival wholly aligned with my own. It would be a lie to say that I felt safe and spiritually comforted throughout the entirety of my trip. However, through grace and mercy, I managed to find—or be led to—a few spiritual mentors in the festival who affirmed and guided me.

One of the most memorable instances was during one of the final days of worship. Spiritual mentors were volunteering to privately pray for anyone who came forward. Robyn took me by the hand, and we were led to an American Hungarian minister. At first, I was confused as to why Robyn thought I needed prayer. I wasn't visibly upset or emotional. It wasn't until I shook hands with the minister that my loneliness and frustration poured out of me like an offering in a time of need. The mere act of being seen by a compassionate follower of Christ broke my composure and silence.

"I refuse to believe that my pain is a result of poor faith!" The words sprang out of me, begging to be heard, demanding attention against the teachings that diminish mental illness.

As I said those words, I felt it. A calling. Christ spoke through the minister, holding my hand in the darkness. This young Korean Canadian woman did not realize just how badly she needed a prayer from an American Hungarian minister in Hungary that night. Amid differences in culture, race and spiritual backgrounds, I found powerful, potent moments of

spiritual connection.

To anyone considering a similar trip for themselves or others, I pray that you are given Christ's unexpected opening in another part of the world.

A Moment of Grace

By Robyn Ahn

This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to travel to Hungary with Sophia, a fellow PCC participant, as part of the international group at the Starpoint Youth Festival. Looking back, I can say that the trip was nothing short of amazing—eye-opening, faith-deepening and filled with moments I'll carry with me for a long time.

Our first few days were spent in Budapest. The weather was unbearably hot, but the energy of meeting so many people from across the world kept us going. Participants came from South Africa, Taiwan, Canada, Ireland, Germany and the largest delegation from Northern Ireland. Other than that big group, most of us arrived in pairs, which made it easy to bond quickly. Within days, strangers became good friends.

The week unfolded with worship, teaching, conversations and time spent getting to know one another. What struck me right away was the diversity of stories, perspectives and cultures, yet how naturally we bonded through our shared faith. We also got to know the Hungarian participants, learning about their culture, hearing about their lives. And seeing how deeply this Christian festival impacted Hungarian youth gave me a deeper appreciation for both their faith and mine. The theme of the week was "Breathe," and centred on anxiety and the reminder that true peace can only be found in Christ. Over and over, I was reminded that no matter where we come from, we all share the same need for hope, grace and salvation. The message was clear and powerful: we are saved through our faith in Christ and what he has done. It

was beautiful to see this truth lived out and celebrated in so many different ways across cultures.

Though there were countless memorable moments, one in particular stands out to me as the perfect summary of the trip. On the very last day, we were asked to all wear white. The gathering began with worship songs and a message that led into a time of communion and prayer. Slowly, thousands of us made our way to the table to take communion. Looking around, I was struck by how deeply personal and precious each person's relationship with God is. As I took my elements, I teared up. I saw wave after wave of people coming forward to share in communion, and it struck me deeply: this is a glimpse of what is to come, when all of God's children will feast together at God's table. People from different nations, different languages, different stories—all united in Christ. It was overwhelming in the best way.

That sight, simple yet profound, was one of the most moving experiences during the trip. It reminded me of the unity we share in Christ, no matter where we come from.

As I reflect on my time in Hungary, I am filled with gratitude for the friendships I built, the culture I experienced, and the faith that was strengthened in me. This trip was more than just a journey across borders—it was a journey of the heart.

I left Hungary with joy, peace and a renewed reminder that in Christ alone we are saved—a hope we can all cling to every single day.



Robyn, Wei and Sophia in Hungary.

BOOKS

Fifty Years of Harmony

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

In his prologue to *Fifty Years of Harmony: A History of Presbyterian Music Camp, 1972 to 2022*, author Angus Sutherland observes that “Leaders come and go; some people hang around for a good long time while others drop in for a little while and may get involved for various lengths of time.” An apt observation about the life cycle of congregations, Angus applies it as well to his accounting of Presbyterian Music Camp (PMC)—thereby setting the scene for this book.

My own family was among those who dropped in for a little while. We first attended PMC in 2003, and remained on the roster of participants until 2007. Other matters assumed importance in the years following, and we never did return to the shores of Stoneleigh Lake (home to PMC for close to 25

years). But the memories of those five years remained very vivid. From the haunting sound of *Ubi Caritas* echoing through the candlelit lakeside performance space, to the boisterous chanting of “elbows, elbows off the table!” in the dining hall; from battling wasps away in front of the Tuck Shop, to enjoying the warmth of an evening campfire (steps away from where intrepid souls had taken the polar bear dip earlier that morning!), PMC was quite an experience.

And that's what this book is all about. At 52 pages in length, this visual celebration of PMC can be savoured in one sitting—perfect for being enjoyed in the company of adults, children and grandchildren (that multiple generations have been involved over the years is an important part of the PMC story). The prose is accessible, and the bright hues gracing each page make it a pleasure to read.



Pages 2 through 13 trace the history of PMC from its origins in efforts to promote the then-new 1972 Book of Praise, through 1995, when surging attendance resulted in PMC splitting, quite literally, into two camps. After more than two decades, the original Golden Lake site described in these pages gave way to Camp Tamarack on Stoneleigh Lake (northeast of Bracebridge, Ont.), and Wesley Acres Camp, in Prince Edward County. Pages 15 through 19 cover the latter, while pages 20 through 22 are devoted to telling readers of the challenges and opportunities found at Tamarack.

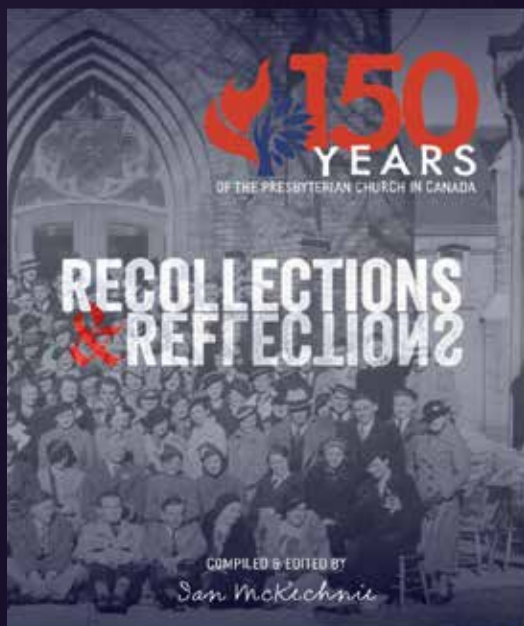
Alumni of Wesley Acres Camp will be pleased to see that they are well represented in *Fifty Years of Harmony*, particularly since that wing of PMC ceased to exist after 2017 (and had loosened its ties to the PCC some years before that). For those of us whose memories are limited to Camp Tamarack, the backstories to these other sites make for fascinating reading. (In 2023, PMC relocated to Camp Kintail, and the story of how this came about is recounted on p. 50.)

Pages 46 through 48 are devoted to memories shared by members of the PMC community—but I couldn't help

but think that many more memories could have been included. Moreover, spreading them out among the various chapters, rather than consigning them to the back of the book, would have wonderfully complemented the suite of photographs illustrating such topics as workshops, performances and food at music camp. Including site maps of Golden Lake, Tamarack and Wesley Acres would also have enriched the vivid descriptions of these special places.

Nonetheless, readers who have not had the opportunity to attend PMC will surely want to fill out those registration forms after paging through this volume. *Fifty Years of Harmony* can best be described as a kind of museum exhibit about PMC, sandwiched between the covers of a book, each page an interpretive panel about the memories made over the course of half a century. Although publication was delayed by a few years, the final product has been well worth the wait.

To order a copy of *Fifty Years of Harmony: A History of Presbyterian Music Camp, 1972 to 2022*, email Taras Broadhead at pmc.m.comms@gmail.com.



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BOOKS

A Tribute to Darrell Guder's Legacy

By the Rev. Rebecca Simpson,
Assistant Dean, St. Andrew's
Hall in Vancouver, B.C.

The Continuing Witness of the Missional Church: A Tribute to Darrell Guder's Enduring Legacy

Edited by Jason Byassee,
Albert Y. S. Chu, Tim Dickau,
Ross A. Lockhart
and Andrea Perrett
Cascade Books, 2025

At a time when many congregations are wrestling with questions of identity, purpose and relevance, a new volume edited by the Dean of St. Andrew's Hall, the Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart, and colleagues, offers timely theological reflection and practical insight. *The Continuing Witness of the Missional Church* is a Festschrift honouring the life and teachings of Darrell L. Guder, a seminal figure in missional theology whose work has shaped generations of pastors, scholars and church leaders across North America and beyond. For the last dec-

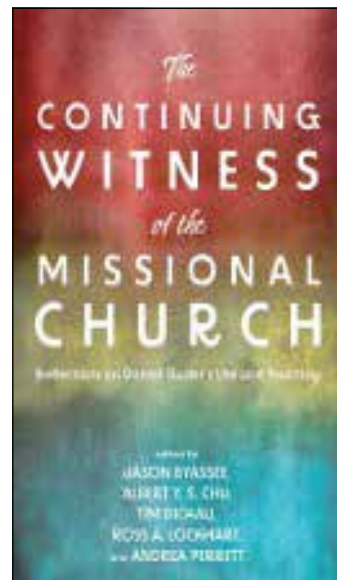
ade, Darrell Guder served as Senior Fellow of the Centre for Missional Leadership at St. Andrew's Hall.

This collection of essays, co-edited by Jason Byassee, Albert Y. S. Chu, Tim Dickau, Andrea Perrett and Ross Lockhart, brings together voices from diverse ministry contexts to reflect on Guder's influence and extend his vision into new terrain. The contributors—many of whom are Presbyterian Church in Canada leaders and have worked closely with Guder or been deeply impacted by his scholarship—offer thoughtful, accessible reflections on what it means to be the church in a post-Christendom world. Centre for Missional Leadership (CML) director Mark Glanville provides a thoughtful afterword reflecting on the impact of Guder's legacy for the missional church today.

At the heart of the book is the conviction that the church is not a static institution but a dynamic, sent community. This missional identity, first ar-

ticulated in the landmark work *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, edited by Darrell Guder, is revisited and reimagined throughout the volume. Contributors explore how this identity plays out in urban renewal, intercultural ministry, theological education and congregational life. The essays are not merely academic; they are grounded in lived experience and pastoral practice, making them especially relevant for Presbyterian leaders seeking to navigate the challenges of ministry today.

Ross Lockhart's own contribution reflects on the role of theological education in forming missional leaders. Drawing on his experience as founding director of the Centre for Missional Leadership at St. Andrew's Hall in Vancouver, Ross challenges seminaries to move beyond traditional models and embrace pedagogies that equip students for ministry in secular and pluralistic contexts. His essay, like many in the volume, is both a tribute



to Darrell Guder's legacy and a call to action.

Tim Dickau, known for his work in urban church renewal with CML, offers a compelling narrative of transformation at Grandview Church in East Vancouver. His essay illustrates how Guder's theology can animate community engagement and social justice, reminding readers that missional witness is not confined to preaching or programming but is embodied in relationships and neighbourhoods.

Andrea Perrett's reflection on the impact of Darrell's teaching and mentorship on her preaching is insightful and moving. She emphasizes the importance of broadening proclamation beyond simply preaching in order to thicken the description to a broader Christian witness, influenced deeply by Guder's teaching and character.

Throughout the volume, readers will find a consistent emphasis on faithful presence rather than institutional survival. The contributors of this volume do not lament the decline of Christendom; instead, they see it as an opportunity for the church to rediscover its vocation as a witness to God's reconciling love in the world. This

posture is deeply aligned with Reformed theology, affirming the sovereignty of God and the church's participation in God's mission.

While the book is rich in theological insight, it is also deeply personal. Many essays include stories of mentorship, gratitude and transformation, painting a portrait of Guder not only as a scholar but as a pastor and friend. These tributes add warmth and depth to the volume, making it a fitting celebration of a life lived in service to the church. As Craig Barnes noted in his endorsement, "Guder has led so many into the profound joy of staying on the move with the gospel. These essays offer a compelling glimpse into ways his own life incarnated the call to be Christ's witnesses."

For Canadian Presbyterian readers, *The Continuing Witness of the Missional Church* offers both encouragement and challenge. It affirms The Presbyterian Church in Canada's commitment to thoughtful theology and public witness, while urging congregations to embrace innovation, humility and courage. Whether you are a minister, elder or lay leader, this book will inspire you to reflect on your own missional calling and the ways your community can bear witness to the gospel in today's world.

In honouring Darrell Guder's legacy, the editors and contributors have created a resource that is not only retrospective but generative. It invites us to continue the conversation, to listen deeply to our contexts and to respond faithfully to God's call. In doing so, it reminds us that the witness of the missional church is not a passing trend but a continuing vocation—one that is as urgent and hopeful today as ever.

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REFLECTIONS

Rivers in the Desert: Seeing God's New Thing

*By the Rev. Daniel A. Surya,
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church in Lethbridge, Alta.*

"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Isaiah 43:18–19).

There's something deeply honest in these words from Isaiah. They were spoken to God's people at a time when they were tired, uncertain and homesick. Homesick for what? For what once was: the "good old days." Life in exile had been gruelling. Their routines were gone. Their temple, once the centre of their identity, was in ruins. They could only look back and long for what used to be.

And then God speaks through Isaiah: "Do not remember the former things, or [even] consider the things of old."

God isn't asking them to erase their memories. He's asking them not to let nostalgia become their prison. While they were busy longing for yesterday, God was already

shaping tomorrow. "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

That little question: "do you not perceive it?" feels like it lands right in the heart. It's as if God is saying, Can you see what I see? Can you imagine what I'm doing, even when the ground looks barren?

And here's the surprising part: God's "new thing" doesn't begin in comfortable or familiar places. It starts in the wilderness and the desert.

In scripture, those two words—*wilderness* and *desert*—carry deep weight. They are not vacation spots; they are places of struggle, silence and scarcity. Yet those are precisely the places where God loves to work.

When the Israelites wandered in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, God fed them with manna. When Elijah fled into the desert, God met him with bread and water. When Jesus began his ministry, he didn't start in the temple; he started in the wilderness. Again and again, God chooses barren ground as the birthplace of something new.

And friends, that's God's specialty: bringing new life out

of dry ground, bringing light out of darkness, hope out of despair, and beauty out of brokenness.

From the very beginning, that's who God is. Remember Genesis? When there was nothing, absolutely nothing, God spoke, and something began to live. Creatio ex nihilo, theologians call it: creation out of nothing. That's the heartbeat of our faith. The God who began everything from nothing is still creating something new out of what feels empty today.

Perhaps that's what we, as the church, need to remember in this season. Many of us look around and feel a bit like the Israelites did. Things have changed. The church landscape in Canada isn't what it used to be. Congregations are smaller. The pews aren't as full. The culture around us feels more distracted, more secular. It can feel like a kind of wilderness: uncertain, unfamiliar and a little dry.

But what if this wilderness is not a sign of God's absence, but the very soil where God is beginning something new?

God says, "I will make a way in the wilderness." Not a way around it. Not a way out of it. But a way *through* it. God doesn't promise to airlift people to comfort. He promises to walk with them, step by step, building a road where there was none before.

Then God adds, "I will make rivers in the desert." In other words: I can bring life where you see only barren lands.

In scripture, water often represents God's Spirit: a renewing, life-giving presence. So



when God talks about "rivers in the desert," it's a description of the power of God's Spirit to revive what feels lifeless. That's what God is doing in church today: bringing fresh hope, new imagination, and creative forms of ministry that flow beyond familiar boundaries.

The truth is that every generation of the church must learn this lesson. We can be grateful for the past, but we can't live there. The "good old days" were good because God was present in them. But God is still here, still moving, still speaking. And God invites us to look for the signs of this new thing; signs that might look smaller, simpler, or slower than we expect, but no less sacred.

Perhaps the "new thing" God is doing isn't about more programs or louder activity, but about deeper love, humbler service and bolder imagination. Maybe it looks like listening better to our neighbours. Maybe it looks like sharing stories of faith in ordinary places. Maybe it looks like trying new ways of worship or community that reach people who would never step inside our doors.

In the congregation I serve, we've been reflecting on this through a theme we call "Beyond These Walls." It's not about abandoning who we are. It's about carrying God's love into the spaces where God's light is most needed. Our

walls—literal and symbolic—are good for gathering, but not for keeping. We come inside to be filled; we go outside to pour out. We come inside to be healed; we go outside to bring healing.

So, as we stand at this moment in the life of the church, grateful for our heritage but aware that things are changing, let's not be afraid. The wilderness does not mean God has left us. It may be the very place God is inviting us to see his hand at work.

This reflection was first shared as a sermon on Sunday, Oct. 19, at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lethbridge, Alta., as our congregation begins a new initiative called the Reimagining Team—a group formed with the hope that it will spark that same spirit of renewal and imagination among us all.

Isaiah's words remind us that the future of the church doesn't depend on our ability to recreate the past. It depends on our willingness to perceive what God is doing now: to notice the small green shoots breaking through dry ground, to listen for the sound of water running beneath the surface, to believe that God is still making all things new.

So look closely. The Spirit is still moving. The wilderness is not the end of the story. It just may be the beginning of God's new thing.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Lethbridge, Alta.

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REFLECTIONS

Spirit-led AI

*By Dillon W. Hausauer,
digital communications
professional and elder, St.
Andrew's Presbyterian Church
in Lethbridge, Alta., and
secretary on the Committee
on Church Doctrine*

When I was growing up, my mother visited a friend whose father was a minister. As the evening service approached, her friend said, “Oh, don’t worry, he’ll just pull a sermon from the box.”

The image stayed with my mother, and through her, with me. The idea of a sermon box was practical, yet it raised questions about how to balance the wisdom of words already written with the need to speak into the present moment.

In this modern age, the sermon box has become digital. Words can now appear instantly, formed by systems that have never prayed, reflected or believed.

Known as artificial intelligence (AI), these systems are built to recognize patterns, make predictions and generate responses by processing vast amounts of data. Through exposure to language, images and human interactions, these systems learn to create text that seems natural or perform tasks that once required only human input. Without understanding or emotion, AI identifies patterns and produces what seems most likely to come next. At its best, it

processes and summarizes information quickly, leaving meaning and discernment as entirely human responsibilities.

Between my work in digital communications and my role as an elder, who provides pulpit supply and supports a national committee, I see the intersection of technology and theology. In my professional life, I use AI almost every day. Now, I have prayerfully begun to experiment with how these same tools might assist in ministry, supporting rather than replacing the deeply human and spiritual work the church requires.

The development of artificial intelligence has outpaced ethical guardrails, and much of it has caused significant concern. Within any ethical discussion, the phrase “human in the loop” reminds us that people must remain responsible for judgement and accountability. Sometimes this is also called “human-led AI,” a term that emphasizes that control and direction must remain in human hands. For those guided by faith, this echoes the call to be Spirit-led. We are to let the Spirit guide us as we guide these tools. Machines can generate language, but they cannot discern meaning.

In ministry, that distinction carries weight. While AI may organize ideas or improve clarity, only people can listen for the Spirit. The heart must remain engaged where the al-

gorithm cannot.

Colossians 3:16 reminds us, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.” Focusing on the word of Christ allows our teaching and preaching to be guided by wisdom. In all uses of AI or other tools, that focus on Scripture anchors discernment and keeps the Spirit at the centre of our work.

During the summer, my sermon preparation offered a testing ground for this approach. As always, I started with prayer and contemplation. After selecting a passage and theme, I formed an outline and recorded myself talking through it. I put the transcription into ChatGPT, my AI tool of choice, and asked it to create talking points from what I said. From those points, I recorded myself again, refining the message I would share from the pulpit. Each pass brought more clarity. When the final version felt whole, I used the tool to produce a written copy in my voice, providing a printed version for those who prefer to read or revisit the sermon afterward. Rather than writing for me, the technology reflected what was already present, helping me notice patterns and phrasing. For some in the congregation, that printed version extended worship beyond the moment of preaching.

Committee work has revealed another form of part-



nership. Prayer and dialogue continue to guide decisions, but AI quietly manages the surrounding details, creating meeting notes, action items, distribution lists and reminders. These small tasks, once heavy, now move more lightly, leaving space for shared reflection.

Alongside this, a task manager I built through ChatGPT keeps my professional, church and personal commitments visible in one place. The overview brings coherence, offering perspective without removing responsibility.

Through these practices, discernment stays central. Technology may assist, but it cannot replace the attentive heart or the listening mind. Philippians 4:8 provides a measure for our use of AI: “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

We must be intentional in what we say and write when

using AI. Because it has no discernment, we bear full responsibility for the truth, clarity and excellence of what we produce. That duty must never be delegated; it remains ours to uphold.

Each new tool reveals something about the church’s approach to change. Fear resists, fascination rushes ahead and wisdom waits, observing, testing and proceeding with care. Using AI in ministry requires discernment and care. The tool may assist with organization and communication, yet the human presence at its core must remain. Words produced with AI should always be guided by truth, compassion and faithfulness, shaped through discernment that only people can bring.

For those still uncertain where to begin, start simply. Choose an AI tool such as ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini and spend time experimenting. Watch a few videos on YouTube that explain AI for beginners. These systems change quickly, so watch something recent. Don’t worry about finding the perfect tool; they evolve too fast to optimize. The goal is not perfection but participation, so just begin exploring and let learning unfold.

Remember, faith in this technological age depends less on mastery of systems and more on attentiveness to God’s guidance. The witness of the church will endure only as long as its people remain human in how they listen, decide and serve.

God grants guidance. As humans, we provide the context. AI is a tool available to bring these together and to share with those we serve.

Check out the PCC’s Social Action Hub

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

presbyterian.ca/social-action



REFLECTIONS

The Present Crisis LXVII

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

In recent issues, I have tried to describe how an unfortunate theology can lead to destructive actions. I have pointed out certain similarities between the teachings of white American Evangelicalism and the ancient gnostic heresy which plagued the early Christian church.

Perhaps the most prominent feature of that early heresy was its claim to be superior to and entirely different from ordinary Christianity. The Gnostics referred to themselves as the "gnostikoi," the ones who know, the ones "in the know." They were not at all like the mere church-attending, ordinary Jew or gentile populating the new religion. They were not informed by that open knowledge called the "gospel." No, the Gnostics were recipients of a secret knowledge hidden from the ordinary believers. The Gnostics were the elite—a spiritual "in group."

White American Evangelicals have been moving in that gnostic direction for some time now. For decades they have identified themselves as "born again Christians," distinguish-

ing themselves from ordinary folk who "claim" to be Christians. They have made it clear that there is little or no connection between themselves and those who just go through the motions of faith. This posture has allowed the Evangelicals to draw a sharp line between themselves and any Christians who might oppose them. With the Evangelicals' wholehearted support of the Trump government and of the MAGA culture, they have been able to divide the country into *us* and *them*. *Us*—being the true church—are not responsible for anything that goes wrong. *Them*—who are not among the true believers—are the orchestrators of all evil.

The perfect example of this divide has become evident in the aftermath of the Charlie Kirk assassination in Utah. Almost immediately following the dreadful event, President Trump and many of his prominent supporters began to blame the killing on the liberals, left-wing lunatics, socialists, Democrats. On them.

At the same time, no responsibility has ever been accepted regarding the almost lethal attack on Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, Paul, or for the murder of Melissa Hortman,



the Speaker emerita of the Minnesota House of Representatives, and her husband, Mark.

But in this case of a probably unwell young man apparently acting alone we have the President's deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller, posting: "There is an ideology that has steadily been growing in this country which hates everything that is good, righteous and beautiful and celebrates everything that is warped, twisted and deprived. It is an ideology at war with family and nature. It is envious, malicious and soulless. It is an ideology that looks upon the perfect family with bitter rage while embracing the serial criminal with tender warmth. Its adherents organize constantly to tear down and destroy every mark of grace and beauty while lifting up eve-

rything monstrous and foul. It is an ideology that leads, always, inevitably and willfully, to violence—violence against those [who] uphold order, who uphold faith, who uphold family, who uphold all that is noble and virtuous in the world. It is an ideology whose one unifying thread is the insatiable thirst for destruction."

Miller's vision is, of course, preposterous; the idea that there could be any group left or right so monstrous exposes a rather sick view of human nature. However, since he is a powerful representative of Evangelicalism it does give us an idea of how the unsound theology of us vs. them can lead to a corrupt ethic and into dangerous corporate actions.

Over and against this gnostic-like MAGA theology abides

the teachings of the Apostle Paul: "Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12: 17–18). And also: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another, and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must also forgive" (Colossians 3: 12–13).

Ordinary Christians confess at least once a week that they fail to live up to these Pauline teachings, but nevertheless these are our standards. In this direction we are striving, and with Christ as our Saviour we soldier on.

DEATH NOTICES

Read full obituaries online at presbyterian.ca

Priscilla May Anderson
Deceased November 3, 2025
Port Rowan, Ont.

The Rev. Mervyn Edward Tubb
Deceased October 26, 2025
Ridgetown, Ont.

Dorothy Corinne Ruddell
Deceased September 13, 2025
Orillia, Ont.

The Rev. Joseph E. Williams
Deceased September 6, 2025
Toronto, Ont.

The Rev. Keith Boyer
Deceased August 30, 2025
Barrie, Ont.

The Rev. G. Walter Read
Deceased August 21, 2025
Ancaster, Ont.

The Rev. Linda Whitehead
Deceased August 9, 2025
Aylmer, Que.

The Rev. Douglas Lennox
Deceased August 6, 2025
Owen Sound, Ont.

The Rev. Gabor Dezse
Deceased July 29, 2025
Edmonton, Alta.

The Rev. Sam A. McLaughlan
Deceased May 27, 2025
Montreal, Que.

The Rev. Dr. Glynis R. Williams

Deceased October 28, 2025

"I just love people!" said the Rev. Dr. Glynis Williams with a warm smile and sparkling eyes in the last days of her life as she talked about ministry, especially with people seeking refuge in Canada.

Before she was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, Glynis served as a palliative care nurse. She was the founder of Action Réfugiés Montréal, a not-for-profit organization seeking justice for asylum-seekers and refugees. The Presbyterian College in Montreal, Que., recognized Glynis for her service to people in search of safety in a new land by conferring on her the degree of Doctor of Divinity *honoris causa*. She served a term working in Syria with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and was then appointed Associate Secretary of International Ministries for The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Glynis died on October 28, 2025, in Toronto. Celebrations of her life and witness were held in many parts of Canada and overseas.



JUST WONDERING...



Submit your questions to connection@presbyterian.ca

Our Session adopted an inclusive wedding policy a couple years ago. Since then, we've been taking steps to be more intentionally supportive of LGBTQI+ people. How can we make use of our website to let people know about these changes?

*Answered by Carragh Erhardt,
Life and Mission Agency*

When planning the content for your website, it can help to imagine who might be looking at it and what they might hope to learn about your congregation. There are lots of reasons why someone might want to know about your congregation's policies about LGBTQI+ inclusion. It is best practice to set up your website so that navigating to relevant information requires as few clicks and as little scrolling as possible. This means there might be a few different places on your website where it makes sense to describe your decisions and actions so far.

For example, someone who is looking for potential wedding venues will likely look for a page that is labeled "Weddings" or "Rentals." Having a brief description of your wedding policy and a download of the full policy on a clearly labeled page lets readers find essential information quickly while also giving

them access to more detailed information without needing to scroll through one long page.

People who are seeking a new congregation to attend are more likely to focus on the congregation's home page or "About Us" page to see whether they've shared an inclusion or welcome statement. These statements do not need to be long, but it's helpful for them to have a degree of specificity. For instance, "people of all genders and sexual orientations are invited to participate in every aspect of church life, including baptism, membership and leadership" is much clearer than "all are welcome." People may also be looking for information about the kinds of organizations your congregation partners with or the types of events that your congregation hosts.

Another aspect of your online presence to consider is recorded services. Since many congregations have started posting recordings of their worship services online, people who are deciding



whether they want to attend a particular church will often watch recordings from past services to get a sense of the style and feel of worship at a particular congregation. Some congregations create short welcome videos for YouTube, for example, to highlight who they are as a community of faith and what people can expect when they visit.

Once you've done some initial work to add this information to your website, consider asking a few people who aren't part of the congregation to visit the website and ask how long it takes them to learn how the congregation approaches LGBTQI+ inclusion. If they find it challenging or have unanswered questions, use that feedback to guide your next round of website updates.

PULPIT VACANCIES

Find all pulpit vacancies online at presbyterian.ca

Atlantic Provinces

Alliston, PE – WellSpring
(full-time minister)

Dartmouth, NS – Iona
(part-time minister)

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

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

Quebec & Eastern Ontario

Almonte, ON – Community
(full-time minister)

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

Inverness, ON – Inverness
(full-time ecumenical shared ministry)

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

Montreal, QC – Chinese
(part-time associate pastor for English ministry)

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

Central, Northeastern Ontario & Bermuda

Bramalea, ON – St. Paul's
(part-time minister)

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

Guelph, ON – St. Andrew's
(full-time lead minister and head of staff)

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

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

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

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

Markham, ON – Celebration
(full-time minister)

Midland, ON – Knox
(full-time minister)

Milton, ON – Nassagaweya
(full-time minister)

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

Presbytery of Brampton, ON – General Presbyter
(full-time)

Port Carling, ON – Knox & Torrance, ON – Zion
(full-time minister)

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

Toronto, ON – Ghanaian
(contract minister)

Toronto, ON – Ghanaian
(part-time interim minister consultant)

Toronto, ON – Mimico
(full-time minister)

Vaughan, ON – Vaughan Community (full-time youth minister)

Southwestern Ontario

Chatham, ON – First
(full-time minister)

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

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

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

London, ON – St. George's
(full-time minister)

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

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

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

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

Strathroy, ON – Caradoc
(part-time minister)

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

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

Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario

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

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

Alberta & the Northwest

Edmonton, AB – First
(full-time minister)

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

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

British Columbia

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

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