

Connections Summer 2015

Comox Valley Presbyterian Church



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A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

For campers like Mike and me, the arrival of Summer is always welcome. However, we are pretty blessed to live in a place where we have actually been camping since March! For those of us who are not tied to the school schedule it is possible for summer to come and go without much change in routine. However, I still try to make an effort to enjoy all that this incredible valley has to offer especially with longer, warmer, drier, days.

Although Summer doesn't officially start until June 21st I feel as though it started in April at the Women's Retreat. Not only were the weather, facilities and speaker amazing but the four women who attended from CVPC had some memorable experiences together. Pat Dutcher-Wells, as I knew she would, was a great speaker who taught us how to read certain passages about important women in the Old Testament. I will never

look at the story of Rahab in Joshua 2 the same again. It is an incredible story about a Prostitute who saves the lives of some of Joshua's spies!

However, my favourite moment occurred when the four of us from CVPC enjoyed a lovely walk along a creek in Honeymoon Bay. During the "free time" on the Saturday the four of us drove into the small cottage town looking for a nice walk. When we came to a small beach we found two girls aged 8 and 9 and asked if they knew of any trails in town. The two of them not only suggested one but offered to ride their bikes to the trail-head to show us where it was. Although, in this day and age, we are trained to be cautious, and children are taught to be wary of strangers, this one moment was something straight out of an old time story. The girls walked ahead of us along the trail and showed us where they liked to cross the creek, swim, and check out

the wildlife. They talked about their school and what it was like to live in a small community. We talked about where we were from and why we were there for the weekend. As they sat on a log with their feet dangling in the water, across the way a river otter jumped up on the diving dock to check us out. It was all pretty idyllic and we all had a sense of gratitude for this shared experience.

It made me think about what Jesus said to the disciples when they tried to push the children away. He said, "Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." We often think it means that we have to be naive or innocent but I believe it has to do with trust and appreciation. Children have an wonderful way of making

us see the world differently and simply appreciate it. As the children all around us finish up another school year we will see more of them spending time enjoying the lazy days of summer. I would encourage you to also take time to enjoy it. Spend time appreciating all the things that surround us throughout God's creation.

I know I am looking forward to spending most of the summer here with you. Not only am I looking forward to attending the Vancouver Island Musicfest, Filberg Festival and the Comox Air Show but I am also looking forward to sharing with you in worship over the summer. And of course Mike and I are looking forward to camping throughout the area!

Rev. Jenn Geddes



The four CVPC women who attended the Presbyterian Women's Retreat: L-R Jenn Geddes, Heather Philip, Sheila McLellan and Sharon Scott

Important Dates from the Minister

June 23	Presbytery Meeting and Service for Dissolution of Knox, Port Alberni
June 28	Church Picnic and BBQ: BRING A FRIEND TO CHURCH SUNDAY
July 10-13	Camp VIP Weekend Escape at French Beach
July 29-August 3	Camp VIP Family Camp at Rath Trevor
August 30-Sept. 8	Jenn on Holiday
Sept. 14-21	Jenn on Holiday

Reflections on General Assembly

General Assembly (GA) is a unique court in our church for numerous reasons. It is the largest with approximately 300 clergy, church staff and elders gathering from Thursday evening until Monday afternoon. It is the only court that disbands upon completion of the meeting, meaning that commissioners no longer have responsibilities related to General Assembly when it is over. It is also the highest court.

Attending GA can be exhausting because it is long days with a lot of sitting. Friday, Saturday and Sunday consist of three sederunts, one in the morning 8:30am-12pm, one in the afternoon 2-5pm and one in the evening 7-8:30pm with no planned breaks during those sederunts! Despite all this meeting and sitting, it is an opportunity for fellowship with old friends and making new ones. I met the Rev. Tim Archibald, who planted a church in Nova Scotia at the same time that CVPC was starting. He remembered fondly some conferences that he attended with D'Arcy Lade when they were both starting their

churches. I was also able to connect with my camp counsellor who is now serving as Camp Kintail Director, the Rev. Theresa MacDonald. GA allows ministers to connect with other ministers and listen to elders from other congregations. It serves as a reminder of our connectivity as a Presbyterian church.

As I mentioned in the service following my return, a highlight for me was the Circle Groups which were unique to this GA. Due to the abundance of overtures, regarding whether the Presbyterian Church in Canada should become fully inclusive to the LGBT community or not, there was a need to begin discerning God's will. As a result, we spent two days in a committee of the whole in which we could share our opinions openly, honestly and with respect. This was made even more moving by the wonderful guidelines that had been prepared for us. I have included them and their descriptions on page 5 for you, so that you can also review them as we as a congregation will have our own circle group discussions on the same topic when the resources and study guide is made available at the end of October.



The Presbytery of Vancouver Island
Commissioners: Maxine Balsdon, Laura Kavanagh, Jenn Geddes and Anne Krauss

Overall, while tired and sometimes bored, I am so glad I was commissioned to attend the 141st General Assembly at the beginning of June in Vancouver. If you are interested in watching any of the GA sederunts, most are available on line at: <http://livestream.com/the-Presbyterian-Church-in-Canada/pccgeneralassembly2015>. The Presbyterian Record will also have a special report in an upcoming edition and the Acts and Proceedings will be available on line in the near future. It is a good time to be the church!

Jenn Geddes

A Commissioner to the 141st General Assembly, June 4-8, 2015, in Vancouver, BC.

sederunt: a prolonged sitting for discussion; a sitting of a church assembly or other body.

IMPRESSIONS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

Charlie and Sharon Scott had the privilege of being at the Annual Mission Luncheon sponsored by The Dr. E.H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee.

The recipient of the 2015 Award was the Canadian Council for Refugees. This group is committed to the rights and protection of refugees and other vulnerable migrants in Canada and around the world, and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada.

The guest speakers were Janet Dench, Executive Director and Loly Rico, President. They made a joint presentation about their work with many personal anecdotes. Everyone present was moved by the lives of these two women.

Charlie had the opportunity to sit in on the report of the committee on International Affairs and its approach to Government on various issues. Since I was not a Commissioner to the Assembly I participated with others who had a similar status but were invited to share in the discussion on our Church's stance on human sexuality.

The discussion revolved around 4 questions: what did we hope for, what was our greatest fear, how has this impacted on our personal lives and relationships, and what qualities and values of the Gospel do we wish to express. We were carefully instructed by the Moderator that like our Mvano Groups, it was a sharing without challenge, or judgment. It was a great opportunity to participate in this important discussion.

It was exciting for us to hear about the people we are working with and to enjoy the company of folk we have not seen for a good number of years. It was a wonderful experience of the "Church in Action".

Charlie and Sharon Scott

Listening Circles Group Guidelines:

Adapted from "Vocation CARE: A Social and Spiritual Process for Discerning Christian Vocation"

The Fund for Theological Education

1. Be fully present, extending and presuming welcome.

Set aside the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow. Welcome others into this story space and presume you are welcome as well.

2. Listen Generously.

Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. As Quaker Douglas Steere writes, "To listen another's soul into life, into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest gift we can offer to another."

3. Author Your Story.

We all have a story. Some might say, "I don't have a story" or "a story worth telling," but you do and the world is in need of hearing it. You must claim authorship of your own story and learn to tell it to others so they might understand you, be inspired by you and discover what calls you to be who you are, to do what you do or to love what you love.

4. We come as equals.

We don't have the same gifts, limits or experiences, but no person's gifts, limits or experiences are more or less important than another's.

5. It is never "share or die."

You will be invited to share stories and comments in small groups. The invitation is exactly that. You will determine the extent to which you want to participate.

6. No fixing.

We are not here to set someone else straight, right a wrong, or provide therapy. We are here to witness God's presence and movement in the sacred stories and comments we share.

7. Suspend judgment.

Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to another person, and to ourselves, more fully.

8. Turn to wonder.

If you find yourself becoming judgmental or cynical, try turning to wonder: "I wonder why she shared that story or made those choices?" "I wonder what my reaction teaches me?" "I wonder what he's feeling right now?"

9. Hold these stories and comments with care.

There are many people who will benefit from the stories and comments they hear during our time together. Imagine hearing another as you would listen to Scripture — attentively, mindfully and open to the Holy.

10. Be mindful and respectful of time.

We all have something important to share and the discipline of time invites us to focus and make particular choices about what to share and how much to share so that we might hear the deep longings of another's soul.

11. Practice confidentiality care.

We create a safe space by respecting the nature and content of the stories and com-

ments heard. If anyone asks that a story or comment shared be kept in confidence, the group will honor that request.

12. Welcome discomfort and dislocation.

In the midst of new and uncomfortable places and the company of strangers, move against an instinct to construct a mental space of safety or to check out. In what causes unease, see another world to be discovered. Perhaps it already lives secretly within you.

13. Love the questions themselves.

Let your questions linger. Release the compulsion to answer them or to have them answered. Trust the questions to guide you toward loving first what you do not altogether understand. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke says, "Have patience with all that remains unsolved within your heart."

14. Believe that it is possible for us to emerge from our time together refreshed, surprised and less burdened than when we came.

Expect that our work together can provide renewal, refreshment and possibilities for what we can do together to create the future that is waiting to be born, and that seeds planted here will keep growing and flourish in the days ahead in service to God's church and renewing work in the world.

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TALK ABOUT EXPERIENCE AT GA

Notes from the General Assembly Minutes:

- Dr. George Sabra of the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, Lebanon spoke about the challenges of maintaining a viable Christian presence in the Middle East. With ongoing political instability and armed conflicts, many Christians are leaving the birthplace of Christianity.
- The Rev. Patrick Thegu Mutahi from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa commended the community health care work of retiring Dr. Richard Allen. Through Presbyterian Church in Canada programs, Dr. Allen helped get accurate information to people in rural areas about the causes and transmission of HIV/AIDS to strengthen efforts to reduce the spread of this disease in East Africa.
- The Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris compared the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the stumps remaining of old growth forests on the UBC campus where the Assembly was held. Many of these stumps of once mighty trees support new shoots of growth, just as new and diverse small churches are flourishing and small congregations are making significant contributions to their communities.

Tai Chi Classes

Tai-Chi classes were first started @CVPC on Jan. 7 2014, with 27 students signed-up. Class numbers quickly declined due to various reasons, (medical and/or bad time, etc.). Since Sept 2014 we have averaged just over 8 students per class. On several occasions I have had Kathy Taylor and Sherry Irvine lead the class, which was a better option than cancelling the class. The regulars continue to progress well.

Rick Shaw

The ***Fashion Show and Strawberry Tea*** on May 8 attracted over 85 people and raised about \$850 for carpet for the sanctuary risers.

Members of Fellowship Group organizing the tea: front L-R: Sheila McLellan, Christine Cowieson, Jeanne Webb, Julie McWilliam; back L-R Maryka Wester, Ruth Rivington



Models and fashion Show organizers:
L-R Jean Sibbald, Jenn Geddes, Valerie Porteus, Jeannine Taylor, Sylvia Rowlandson, Bev Morrison, Joan Morrison, Roxanne Yaremko, Kathy Taylor

Colourful table settings included take-home napkin rings made by Maryka Wester





Models (L-R) Sylvia Rowlandson, Jeannine Taylor, Joan Morrison, Jenn Geddes and Jean Sibbald display seasonal fashions at the May 8 Strawberry Tea.



On Saturday, June 6 there were 25 in attendance for the **Men's Breakfast** final meeting for the season which included the ladies. Diane Brown, Secretary of Evergreen Seniors Club gave an interesting talk and the morning was enjoyed by all.

