

Connections Spring 2018



COMOX VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

At this time of year we are often faced with more rainy, dark and cold days than we are with dry, sunny and warm ones. While we are fairly lucky compared to the rest of the country with our early snowdrops and green grass, the rain and darkness can take their toll. That is why, on those rare sunny and dry days, you can find an overabundance of people in our local parks and trails. We all know we need to take advantage of the nice weather when it comes, but sometimes our health or our schedules or our lethargy prevent us from actually getting out there and enjoying the fresh air.

I think we sometimes feel that way about events and opportunities in the church. We know how uplifting or nourishing they can be, but sometimes our health, schedules or lethargy prevents us from actually getting out and attending them. I am as much challenged by this as anyone else. I

am, however, in the unique position that I often spend weeks planning a service, Bible Study or program, and therefore I have had the privilege of working with and being inspired by the material well before anyone else. Like the bright sunny day after a week of rain, there is always something refreshing and it is always worth it to take it in. This Lenten and Easter season is no different.

Along with my United Church colleagues I have been planning joint Lent/Holy Week services. Thanks to a suggestion from Sharon Scott we will be jointly running a study on Palestine, and there are a few events to help us celebrate spring. I would encourage you to attend and take in all of them!

Starting Feb. 20th at 1 and running every Tuesday until March 20th there will be a study entitled "Situating the Land of Palestine." This study was written by the Rev. Dr.

Dorcas Gordon and Noel Gordon. Sharon Scott and I have adapted it into a five week study which will also include a viewing of Rick Steve's *Holy Lands*. The intention of this study is to help us understand the complex history of the Holy Lands so that we can have informed opinions about its current situation. The study will include a lot of historical and current information, some Bible readings, and videos. All are welcome.

Everyone is invited to our Annual General Meeting on March 18th following our service. This will be a celebration of our various ministries and programs! It will also include some brief discussions on some upcoming events, changes and interests.

We will celebrate the sacrament of communion on March 4th during our regular service. A Maundy Thursday Soup Supper and service will be held here at CVPC at 6:30 pm on March 29th and the Good Friday service will be held on March 30th at 10am at Comox United (250 Beach Dr.). I am pleased this year that we have been invited to the Janes Farm (5420 Headquarters Rd) for a Sonrise Service on April 1st at 8am, followed by a light breakfast. And our Easter Sunday service at 10:30am is not to be missed.

Last month I was contacted by the associate secretary of Canadian Ministries, a branch of our national church. We have been given the great opportunity to assist the Presbyterian Church in Canada with a visioning pilot project. By using a program designed by Rick Morse called *New Beginnings*, we will have the opportunity to receive an assessment and be coached for a

year by a trained Presbyterian Church in Canada coach. A curriculum will be developed based on our experience and shared with churches across the country. Everyone is encouraged to participate, especially over the weekend of April 6-8 when Rick Morse will visit us. We will also be looking for a few people interested to be a part of this leadership experience (for more information check out hopepmt.org).

Mark your calendars for a Bible study on the Book of Revelation which will start April 12th at 1:30pm and will run every Thursday until May 17th.

Rev. Jenn Geddes

Important Dates:

Every Tuesday from Feb. 20 until March 20
at 1 pm: Situating Palestine Study
March 4 Communion Service
March 11 Spring Forward! Daylight Saving starts
March 18 Congregational AGM
March 25 Palm Sunday
March 29 Maundy Thursday Soup Supper and Service at 6:30pm
March 30 Good Friday Service at Comox United 10am
April 1 Sonrise service at 8am
April 6-8 A Visit from Rick Morse, Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation
Every Thursday from April 12- May 17 at 1:30: The Book of Revelation: Images of Hope Bible Study

LIFE AND MISSION AGENCY

Marion Lade, LMA Rep

Hi Folks: Last spring, Session received notification from our National Church that nominations were being considered for people to serve on various Presbyterian Church Committees. My name was put forward by Session to serve on the **Life and Mission Agency (LMA)**. In late summer, I received confirmation that I had been accepted.

Meetings are held yearly over three days in each of March and November. My first meeting was last November and I would like to take the opportunity to provide an overview. I am now getting ready to head off for the March 5th – 7th meeting scheduled to be held at National Church Office, 50 Wynford Drive, Toronto.

This Committee is made up of a dozen people selected from across the country (I am the only rep from BC) to serve up to three years – with a possibility of one three year extension. Also on the Committee are two representatives from Assembly Council; and three from Women's Missionary Society - a total of seventeen. Five are clergy and the rest are lay people. There are an additional five Ex-Officio members – including the Moderator of General Assembly, General Secretary of Life and Mission Agency; Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer; Principal Clerk of General Assembly and the Executive Director of WMS. All were in attendance.

LMA has oversight over various areas of our Church including Program Support and

Administration; Canadian Ministries; Communications; International Ministries; Justice Ministries; Ministry and Church Vocations; Presbyterian World Service and Development and Stewardship & Planned Giving.

Staff from each of these areas were present to provide updates on the work taking place in their specific area of responsibility and included both what is working well and where there are significant challenges. I really appreciated this time to listen, learn and reflect.

While usually meetings of the LMA take place at **Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)** head office at 50 Wynford Drive in Toronto, given that we were joined by Assembly Council (more info follows), this meeting was arranged to take place at Crieff Hills Retreat Centre – a rural property owned by the National Church easily accessible from Toronto, Hamilton and Guelph.

While many assume that Retreat Centres are somewhat luxurious, I would say that Crieff Hills has a different type of luxury. Located in the midst of farmland and wooded areas, it is esthetically pleasing with beautiful walking trails – which I must admit I got to enjoy only once as we met from about 8:30am – 9pm. From my seating in the conference room, I was distracted by beautiful sunsets each evening. Meals were available in an onsite building that in the early 1900's was a schoolhouse. Pictures of elementary school teachers and students hung on the walls.

While rooms are basic, they are extremely clean. There were no TV's, radios, or clocks. Linens were found on the end of our single beds and we were responsible for making our own and providing the bedding to laundry when we were departing. Each bed had a handmade quilt designed and made by women from local Presbyterian Churches – their names, Church and date the quilt was made stitched in one corner. I shared the room with a woman from Nova Scotia and greatly appreciated getting to know her.

Initially, we began our time together in a joint meeting with the Assembly Council – a group of about 20 with responsibility to deal with the more day-to-day work of the Church between annual General Assembly meetings held in June each year. There are two clergy who are a part of the Assembly Council from this Island – Rev Kouwenberg from Sooke and Rev Chris Clarke from Duncan. I was surprised to learn that this was the first time ever that Assembly Council and LMA met together. For me, and many others, it seemed it should be a regular occurrence.

A highlight for me as well is a greater awareness of resources available on the PCC website. "Take It Up Tuesday" is a weekly post that highlights fun and easy to use ministry resources to help discover new ways to celebrate Christ's presence throughout the seasons of the Church year. This can be accessed through the PCC Facebook page or the Worship Web Page online.

Also, did you know that there are

regular webinars on leadership, renewal and stewardship? You can join from your computer, tablet or smartphone; or alternatively by telephone using the phone number and access code provided. These webinars are free and made possible through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. Here are some of the more recent or those to come:

Jan 24th "Our Doors Are Open:

Welcoming People with
Disabilities in Places of Worship

Feb 14th Neighbourhood Mapping

Feb 28th The Session as

Congregational Leaders

March 14th Vision Casting

April 11th "Aligning Ministry with
Vision"

May 9th "Moving Forward With Your
Church's Vision"

You can also view previous webinars at your leisure. I challenge each of us to become more familiar with the PCC website and what is offered in the way of resources and materials.

In the meeting with Assembly Council it became evident that one of the most significant issues facing our Church is in regard to the policy on human sexuality. There is a booklet entitled "Guide to Understanding Reports About Sexuality" printed for the commissioners to the 2017 General Assembly meeting. If you are interested, this document can be found on the PCC website. There will not be a motion coming forward to this year's General Assembly meeting – but instead significant discussions are taking place across the

Church. As you can imagine, there are those who are struggling on both sides within the PCC and it would seem that there may be implications whichever way the Church decides to go.

Another huge factor for us as a denomination is that we have congregations across our country who are experiencing no growth and in fact are declining in numbers – wondering about their very survival. They feel that their future is grim. Let's face it – we are an aging Church and hold little attraction or perhaps even relevancy for the next generation and their children. I believe that as congregations, we need to discuss the future of the Church as a whole – not because of our need to simply exist – but in order to be God's people in the world!

The Canadian Ministries Department that reports to LMA are developing two pilot projects in order to lead selected congregations through a renewal process. They made the decision to pilot the two programs to see which one works the best in the PCC context. Special attention has been made with each pilot project to gather a wide mix of congregations in terms of geographical location, leadership and context of ministry. As a congregation we will be hearing more about this in the near future. As a point of note, you should also be aware that this is not a uniquely Presbyterian Church issue but one faced by many denominations.

A Presbyterian Church in Paris, Ontario was questioning their future. They opened their Church kitchen to a group called Raw Carrot, who by the way are supported in part

by a bequest from The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Raw Carrot provides meaningful employment and livelihood security to individuals with disabilities who are on social assistance and who want to, and can work. They believe that a sustainable "Hand Up" is way more awesome than a hand-out. Raw Carrot hires individuals on the Ontario Disability Support Program to cook and package handcrafted gourmet soup, made from local ingredients, that is sold not only out of the Church but also in farmers markets and retail locations in the local community. Sales of the healthy soup fund the salaries of those working at the Raw Carrot. Many of these people are now off of social assistance and feeling great worth in the value they bring to their community. They came and served us a most fabulous lunch on one of our meeting days.

Were you aware that in many of our Churches across the country, the Korean Presbyterian Church accesses space for their worship experience? While it would be true that this helps many congregations to remain viable – the relationship that forms between the two can also provide a great richness.

While I have highlighted only some of the discussion that was held – I am happy to provide you with additional details on what is taking place within the various areas that come under the umbrella of the LMA. And I intend to provide an overview of future meetings for your info.

Respectfully submitted

Marion Lade, LMA Rep, February, 2018

JOY TO THE WORLD Nativity Display 2017

This event was held on Dec. 8 and 9, with over 200 nativity sets on display and more than 500 people visiting. Seventy-five children from 2 schools enjoyed special activities such as dress-up and arts and crafts. The Friday afternoon session for seniors and those with mobility issues attracted buses from retirement and care facilities, and tea and cookies were provided. Live music, performed by congregation and community members, accompanied all eleven hours of the event. Thank you to all who helped make this a wonderful event.





THE FELLOWSHIP GROUP DOES IT AGAIN!

The Fellowship Group hosted another successful event in December. The Christmas Tea was intended to give a Christmas experience to those who might need some company during the season. We had about 60 people in attendance. They enjoyed a delightful sing-along with the Aspen Park Elementary School choir. The students' enthusiasm for singing was infectious. The participants had fun playing Christmas Carol Pictionary. The afternoon's entertainment ended with the Rev Bob and Mrs. Lynne Geddes sharing their musical talents. After the performances, tea and traditional Christmas baking were served. Thank you as always to the wonderful Fellowship Group members who helped with organizing, baking and decorating.

-Maryka Wester

