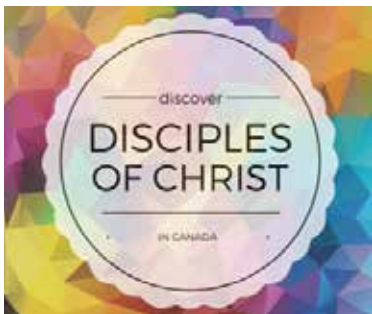


The Canadian Disciple



A Publication of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada

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December / January Prayer Partners

Dec 18 St Thomas Christian Church, St Thomas, ON.
(pastoral search)

Dec 25 Happy Family / Famiglia Feliz, Montreal QC. Pastors Juan Carlos & Julia Rodriguez.
(restarting their ministry)

Jan 1 Chaplains, Counsellors, & Seminarians across Canada

Jan 8 All People's CC, Charlottetown, PEI
Pastor: Scott MacIsaac

Special prayer requests:

- Please keep in prayer all of our brothers and sisters in other faith traditions who have suffered violence & intolerance against them over the past months (esp bombing in Egypt, desecrations in Ottawa, etc)
- Pray for an end to the atrocities in Aleppo, Ethiopia, Middle East, where thousands are dying daily
- Pray for our clergy (active & retired) and their families at this busy time of year.

The Case for Christ

The long wait is over. We have, despite our best efforts, hurried through this Advent season. The candles will soon all be lit and memories of messages on hope, peace, joy and love, will linger around this moment – perhaps like shepherders or wise ones, or anxious new parents – gazing inwards on a new light at the centre of it all. The light on their faces, reflecting back the beauty and wonder of what lies at the centre of our preparations and celebrations.

A tiny baby – wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, we are told. No Ralph Lauren onesies or little mini Converse hi-tops. No private room with sanitized instruments and bright sterile lights. No photographers, or paparazzi documenting the event. No baby shower, balloons, flowers, RESPs or nurseries set up and waiting. Only a baby – tiny, fragile, vulnerable, born and placed in a feed trough filled with fresh, fragrant hay, the warmth of animals and a loving mother to shelter him against the cold night in a strange town, filled with noise and probably a lot of unrest and resentful people – watched over by soldiers – occupiers, enforcers, bullies maybe.

Why? Why no fanfare? Why no squadron of midwives and priests to usher in and bless this long-awaited gift from the Creator? Why no safety, no security, no power and unmistakable majesty? In my heart I have to believe that this was just the best way to get our attention. To prove a point. To show us, once and for all, the lengths to which God, the Creator, Love Divine, is willing to go to show that Love to us, to show us that we are known, understood, loved.

Besides, how fast does celebrity fade? How quickly do we lose interest and move on from the latest fad, switching out one for another when we get tired and bored? But for more than 2000 years, folks have been talking about this baby, born in obscurity, and the difference he makes in the world. Why? Because at some deep and undeniable level, his life is our life.

We...we are fragile, vulnerable, the poor, the oppressed, the lonely and the forgotten. We are the ones living in a land ruled by others, surrounded by resentful and restless people who stand as potential threats around us. But...it is because of these things and so much more that Love-Made-Human came to be with us. And it didn't come to the rich and powerful first, but to ordinary women and men working in the fields when everyone else was at home. This kind of Love is not influenced by money and power, but has a special place for the forgotten, the lonely, the ordinary. (continued on page 2)

The Case for Christ (continued)

This Love came to the ones who opened themselves up to God willingly and without hesitation when It asked for the impossible. Remember Elizabeth? Mary? Joseph? Zechariah?

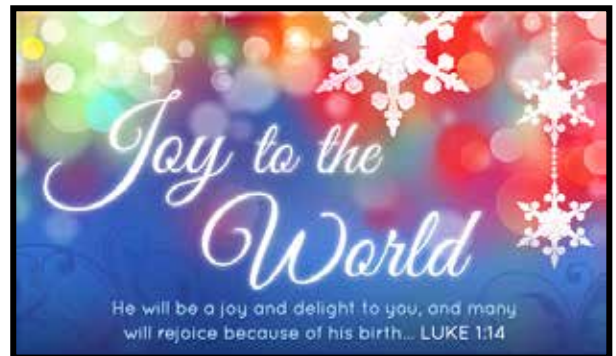
Love came in the form of a baby to show us without a shadow of a doubt, that what saves us from a life of hopelessness is not power, wealth, prestige and celebrity, but Love – not the Hallmark “wuv” of card store shelves – but Love that shatters convention, Love that acts out of selflessness despite what society deems correct and right, Love that never gives up, never leaves, never abandons ... but rather comes quietly and unexpectedly, grows within and with us, teaches us, leads us from within ourselves and within the lives of others around us, Love that brings us into community so that we have the warmth and shelter that we need to survive the cold dark nights of life. Love that comes to us as a flicker of a candle flame, and insists on sparking the flames of all others it touches through us.

This is the case for accepting the Christ child as our own. For he is the most perfect example of the Creator’s undying Love – he is God’s Love made real and in the flesh – the Light of the World, the Messenger, the Teacher, the Forever Friend, the King of our Hearts, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel

– God with Us. God is Love scripture says... and those who now Love, know God (1 John), know the Christ, know the light that comes from God to shine through the whole world so that no one ever need walk in darkness again.

Out of the darkness of one night, in poverty and so fragile, shines a new kind of light that is transforming the world. That light shines still to this day, as distinct as a baby’s cry, as stirring and unforgettable as an angel choir, more precious than rare gifts, never-ending, always before us, behind us, beside us, within us. The Christ has come! Emmanuel – Love With Us Forever!

May that light and Eternal Love shine in your hearts, homes, and congregations this Christmas season and throughout 2017. From my home to yours, Christ’s peace be yours now and always. In Christian service, Jen



News from the Western Churches

Recently I had a chance to spend some time in Alberta with some of our congregations there. Many exciting things are happening all over the place from Calgary to Westlock, Disciples of Christ are alive and well and serving their community with love and compassion.

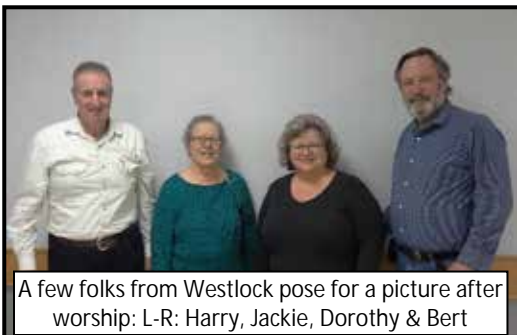


Q FAITH COMMUNITY invited me to come and speak with one of their two gatherings in

Calgary. A vibrant group of people with a deep desire to learn, grow, serve, Q embodies the three hallmarks of the Disciples of Christ – building true community, deep spirituality and a passion for justice. The “recovery model” of their meetings allows for great discussion, dialogue, questions, and relationship to happen all within a safe space. Not only are there two meetings happening now in Calgary, but Pastor Jennifer Watts is currently developing a new plant (Q3) in Los Angeles, California. This effort has been well received in that area and we are looking forward to working with the Pacific Southwest Region to support and nurture this new expression of Christ’s church across Regional boundaries. Please keep Q in your prayers

as they continue to discern the way forward as a non-traditional congregation. And send words of encouragement whenever you can to let them know they have brothers and sisters across this great Region. If you think a Q model community could thrive in your area, please be in touch with the Regional office or Jennifer Watts, as this 12-step model is a wonderful new expression of the church with great potential in Canada.

WESTLOCK COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CHRIST is our northernmost congregation. Although they no longer have a building of their own, they are a welcoming, warm, and energetic group. On a frigid day this December, I wandered into their service in the local community centre and was instantly warmly greeted and welcomed by a number of folks who were there setting up both the worship space and an area for potluck after the service. Music and worship was filled with grace, a strong message of hope and love, and of course time around the Table to remember and give thanks, and recommit



A few folks from Westlock pose for a picture after worship: L-R: Harry, Jackie, Dorothy & Bert

ourselves to the life and call of the Gospel. Following worship we enjoyed a great potluck and time of fellowship where I learned about some of the history of the congregation, ups and downs, and their hopes for the future. While Westlock does not have a pastor, they do have a dedicated group of retired and active pastors from the area who lovingly and faithfully support the community. Folks take care of each other and have a passion for mission – local and global – the centre point of their fellowship together.

Milton Christian Church Celebrates 182 Years & a New-Old Home

Last month I had the honour of speaking at the 182nd Anniversary of Milton Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Dedication of their new building. For many years, Milton has known that they needed to do something with their building which was in need of structural repairs. Through a

I left the Westlock meeting cold from the chill of winter winds, but warm inside, knowing that I had been in the presence of God...with the people of God. Westlock sends their greetings to the rest of the churches across Canada and keeps you in prayer. I hope you will do the same – keep in touch and keep in prayer!

THE WESTERN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP has been hard hit over the past few years with the departure of two historic congregations. However, the Spirit has not left this area, its pastors, nor its congregations. There is a deep desire to connect, support, and keep one another in constant prayer. With two new church starts (Q and Brush with the Spirit), three established congregations (BDUC, Campbell Stone, and McKernan), AND an historic Disciples/Stone Campbell institution (Alberta Bible College), there is ample opportunity to reflect deeply on the changing nature of church, and discern new ways to respond to the Gospel imperative to share the love of Christ together. Pastors Ed Stover, Rachel Frey, Danah Cox, and Jennifer Watts, along with President of ABC, Stanley Helton, met with me in Red Deer to reconnect, meet one another, and spend time in prayer and conversation about how best to be together. We left the time together with a renewed energy and commitment to continue to meet and nurture each other in our ministries, and a desire to begin the hard work of revisioning the Western Christian Fellowship for the future. We are deeply thankful to Davenport Church of Christ and their Pastor Ed Klym for hosting our meeting and providing a warm place out of the cold to do this good work. Your prayers are coveted as these dedicated servants in the West go about the work of Christ's kin-dom in new, traditional, and always inspired ways.

long and arduous process, they decided to try to save as much as they could and yet update the structure to accommodate the needs of a changing congregation. Over the past couple of years, Milton has worked to deconstruct most of the building, landscape their property, and then move the

structure to a new location on the same property. Incorporating the interior beauty of golden oak wainscot and other unique woodwork, the interior of the building was transformed with accessible washrooms, a kitchen on the same level, and a large gathering space as you enter. Classrooms and storage rooms are also now on the same level and have solved the problem inherent in a two-story building. Overall, the project is a testament to the changing nature of how we can be the church in a new day and age. The integration of new gathering spaces with the historic wood reminds us that building relationships with one another is important, just as important as the tradition and teachings of our past. The flexibility of the space which can be



transformed from worship space to dining area in a matter of minutes reminds us that worship happens not only on Sunday mornings, but every time we sit together in love and acceptance with one another and the communities in which we are called to serve. The church of Christ is always changing, adapting to new needs as they arise...anchored in the deep and unchanging love of God for all creation. Please keep this congregation and Pastor Russell Prime in your prayers as they navigate the changes ahead...and begin the hard work of "what comes next"! Like I said in my talk that day, building a building is easy...building beloved community takes commitment, intention, faith, hope, and lots of love. Many blessings to you, Milton CC, as you continue your ministry in the South Shore!

Ecumenical Conversations

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a 'movement for wholeness' and has always been drawn towards the cause of Christian unity. In our local contexts, we are open and eager to work with other congregations in mission, worship, and community activities. In our global context, we partner with a variety of agencies around the globe in mission, and are active members of the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. More recently, we have been invited into dialogue with the United Church of Canada, to look at how we might begin to work more closely together in the future. This dialogue is not a conversation about merger, but rather an on-going conversation about our two denominations, what we have in common, where we are different, and how we might be able to partner and work together here in Canada and the US as a visible sign of the unity of Christ's church. As many of you may know, the Disciples of Christ have a close relationship (full communion) with the United Church of Christ and have been sharing mission dollars with them through our joint Global Missions arm for the past 25 years. Last year, the United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ entered into a partnership (mutual recognition) that would allow greater opportunities for ministry together across the US-Canadian border. Because of these pre-existing relationships, it seems a logical step to be

in conversation with the United Church of Canada with respect to how we might 'close the triangle' and all three bodies work together. The preliminary conversations have just begun with myself, GMP Sharon Watkins, and Paul Tche (President, Council on Christian Unity), along with United Church of Canada ecumenical dialogue staff and we ask for your prayers as we discern purpose and potential. As these talks develop, we will keep you informed and hope that if you have questions, you will forward them to the Regional office.

In addition, while I was in Alberta, I had the opportunity to sit down with a few of the local pastors from the other two streams of the Restoration Movement (A Capella and Independent Churches of Christ) at Alberta Bible College. I am thankful to Stan Helton for arranging this meeting, which I hope will plant the seeds of building relationships between all three streams of our movement. We had a lively discussion around many topics and agreed that while there is an interest in more conversation, we do have some work to do in developing relationships with our sisters and brothers across the Stone Campbell movement. We agreed that the church finds itself in a new context and culture, and seeking a way forward requires deep faithfulness, prayer, and a good amount of innovation, intention, and trust. I hope to return to

ABC in May to attend the Summit which brings all three streams together in a time of learning, fellowship, and conversation. I also look forward to continuing conversations across Canada where there are opportunities to build such relationships in the future.

Finally, yet another high point of my time in Alberta was a quick visit with Julien Hammond, Coordinator of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations for the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton. Julien and I had had a chance to meet briefly last June during the Roman Catholic-Disciples Dialogue meetings in Calgary. Not only did we have a chance to share our experiences in and passion for ecumenism, Julien invited me to

visit the Archdiocese offices. There I learned of the rich history and heritage of the Archdiocese in Edmonton, including their leadership in the inter-faith push to end homelessness and poverty in the city. While our communions and structures are vastly different, what we do have in common as diverse parts of the same body are a commitment to service and mission, exploring and uplifting the issue of unity, and a deep faith in the transformative love of Christ. <>



Celebrations from Across our Country



Send in your pictures and stories about your celebrations!



General Announcements & Invitations

- There is still time to make a donation towards this year's Christmas Offering which supports the work of YOUR Region! Our goal is to raise \$5,000 to fund new church starts, workshop & training opportunities for our congregations, support ecumenical work, extend mission, and a host of other vital things in our life together. 100% of the Christmas offering STAYS IN CANADA! Thank you for your generosity and support!!
- New Prayer Calendar for 2017 follows at the end of this document
- To receive the Canadian Disciple in your email, please send your request to rm@canadadisciples.org or sign-up on our website www.canadadisciples.org.
- Need to get in touch with your Regional Minister? Email rm@canadadisciples.org or call 519-731-4629

Christmas Offering



Supporting the Ministries of Our Region December 11 and 18, 2016

Dear Friends, Over the past six months, your Region has worked hard on your behalf to equip, support, & encourage all of the above ministries, initiatives, & efforts. We are continuing to build, on the foundations of the past, a Canadian church that answers God's call to disciple a new generation, drawing wide the circle of Christ's love. We are your partner in ministry, supporting & extending the work of your congregation to God's glory. Your generous gifts ensure that this vital work will continue with the funds it needs to flourish. If you have never given to Disciples Mission Fund in the past, I thank you for responding to the urgent call for new partners. If you have given in the past, thank you for your dedication to Christ's church across Canada. Without you, our work becomes limited. With you, our potential, with God's grace, is limitless. I pray you will join in this ministry with your financial support & prayers. May the Peace of Christ fill your homes & congregations this Advent, Christmas & always. With gratitude, *Jen Garbin, Regional Minister, Canada*

Your Support Equips, Grows, Connects & Blesses Many!



We celebrate:

Two Xplor residents

*Four new church starts**

Six Quebec pastors together

Two strong youth fellowships

Two new church planters trained

Ten issues of *The Canadian Disciple*

Twenty-two courageous congregations

Five focus areas for growth & development

Five congregations doing pastoral searches

Two Area transformation workshops presented

Seven volunteers involved with ecumenical work

Five Western area leaders planning for the future

ONE NEW SUPPORT TEAM FOR QUEBEC CONGREGATIONS

Two amazing camping facilities reaching 100s of youth & children

Six Disciples studying & under care of the Committee on Ministry

Fourteen different nationalities represented (and counting!)

Thirty active and retired pastors, chaplains, and interns

One new Board excited & praying for growth & renewal

Three Canada-wide ecumenical gatherings

Five (and counting!) languages spoken

One new Congolese congregation

One new Canadian outreach fund

*(*Two new starts have been approved, two are pending)*



“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given... And his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6)

2017 Prayer Partner List Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) In Canada

January		July	
1	Chaplains, Counsellors, & Seminarians across Canada	2	All new church plants & congregations in formation
8	All People's CC, Charlottetown, PEI Pastor: Scott MacIsaac	9	General Assembly & Election of new General Minister & President, Indianapolis, IN
15	Mapleton Church of Christ, Mapleton, ON Pastor: Janet Anstead	16	All People's CC, Charlottetown, PEI Pastor: Scott MacIsaac
22	Word of Life CC/Eglise Parole de Vie, Joliette, QC Pastor: Oscar Wakenge	23	Mapleton Church of Christ, Mapleton, ON Pastor: Janet Anstead
29	Église Évangélique Mahanaïm De La Rive Nord Pastor: Jean Daniel Francois	30	Église Évangélique Mahanaïm De La Rive Nord Pastor: Jean Daniel Francois
February		August	
5	Broadway Disciples UC, Winnipeg, MB Pastor: Bernie Wiebe	6	Broadway Disciples UC, Winnipeg, MB Pastor: Bernie Wiebe
12	Campbell Stone UC, Calgary, AB Pastor: Danah Cox	13	Canadian Regional Board Members & Staff
19	Milton CC, Milton, NS Pastor: Russell Prime	20	Campbell Stone UC, Calgary, AB Pastor: Danah Cox
26	Église Chrétienne de la Pentecôte Missionnaire des Prières (Disciples du Christ) Pastor: Lucien Mezidor	27	Église Chrétienne de la Pentecôte Missionnaire des Prières (Disciples du Christ) Pastor: Lucien Mezidor
March		September	
5	Q1 & 2 Community, Calgary, AB Pastor: Jennifer Watts	3	Milton CC, Milton, NS Pastor: Russell Prime
12	Brush with the Spirit, Calgary, AB: Planter: Danah Cox	10	Q1 & 2 Community, Calgary, AB Pastor: Jennifer Watts
19	Summerville CC, Summerville, NS Pastor: Russell Prime	17	Brush with the Spirit, Calgary, AB: Planter: Danah Cox
26	Westlock Community Church, Westlock, AB	24	Summerville CC, Summerville, NS Pastor: Russell Prime
April		October	
2	Hillcrest CC, Toronto, ON Pastors: Robert Steffer, Ann Stainton, Fred Dizon	1	Westlock Community Church, Westlock, AB
9	McKernan CC, Edmonton, AB Pastor: Ed Stover	8	Thanksgiving Special Offering: Higher Education
16	Easter Special Offering: General Ministries	15	Hillcrest CC, Toronto, ON Pastors: Robert Steffer, Ann Stainton, Fred Dizon
23	West Gore Disciples Church, Kennetcook, NS Pastor: Gus MacDonald	22	McKernan CC, Edmonton, AB Pastor: Ed Stover
30	Sugarbush CC, Guelph, ON Pastors: Awit Marcelino, Jen Garbin	29	West Gore Disciples Church, Kennetcook, NS Pastor: Gus MacDonald
May		November	
7	Famiglia Feliz (new start), Montreal, QC Planters: Juan Carlos & Julia Rodriguez	5	Sugarbush CC, Guelph, ON Pastors: Awit Marcelino, Jen Garbin
14	Winger Church of Christ, Wainfleet, ON Pastor: Kevin McDonald	12	Famiglia Feliz (new start), Montreal, QC Planters: Juan Carlos & Julia Rodriguez
21	Wyndholme CC, Dartmouth, NS Pastors: Neil Bergman, Darlene Brewer, Judithe Adam Murphy	19	Winger Church of Christ, Wainfleet, ON Pastor: Kevin McDonald
28	St Thomas CC, St Thomas, ON Pastoral Vacancy	26	Wyndholme CC, Dartmouth, NS Pastors: Neil Bergman, Darlene Brewer, Judithe Adam Murphy
June		December	
4	Pentecost Special Offering	3	St Thomas CC, St Thomas, ON Pastoral Vacancy
11	Guelph CC, Guelph, ON	10	Christmas Special Offering: Canadian Region
18	Disciples Camping Programs	17	Guelph CC, Guelph, ON
25	Chalice CC, Mississauga, ON	24	Chalice CC, Mississauga, ON
		31	All Canadian Pastors (retired and active), their spouses & families