

GRACE
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- Refugee Update
- Hazelwood
- Mission Moment
- Kids Corner
- Fundraising Update

ONLINE OR
IN-PERSON

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP
SUNDAYS AT 10:30AM

VISIT
WWW.GRACEORLEANS.CA



Good Gracious February 2022

“...In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33b)

As we look forward to 2023 from the start of it, we might feel anxious or wondering about what might happen this year. God's people have felt this way for generations, in the midst of tumultuous change and huge negative historical events. Military empires rise and fall when we look back in history, but living through their expansion meant wondering if I and my family might live or die soon.

The disciples lived through their Master dying and rising. In the midst of his Upper Room discourses, just before he died, he reminds them that trouble in this broken world is certain, but that he has overcome the world. We too are living in a time of losses and are wondering what the next ones might be. God helps us through our losses. God also gives us unexpected hope. The resurrection of Jesus is proof.

Jesus tries to shift our focus from the events that are unfolding to himself. That's why he says in so many ways, "Peace I leave you. My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

As we turn to Jesus anew this year, let us remember this core truth. As I was reading in Ezekiel and Isaiah again this year, I note that I am not to worry or be unduly anxious about relationships, resources and direction. I take these insights from Ezekiel 37, where the Lord resurrects an army. Even when the prophet feels weak and alone in what he is doing and called to do, God is able to do more than we can ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20-21) in terms of resources, in terms of healing, in terms of relationships and certainly in guidance forever.

Similarly, there is comfort and hope found in Isaiah 60, the Lord is our light, and we reflect His light. (verses 1-3) In the end, the Lord gives vision, sight, light forevermore (verses 19-20) emanating from His very self, which is what John the Apostle writes in Revelation (21:22-26). So we trust Him for His direction, His guidance, His power and His way forward.

Let us continue to keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith.

Pastor Jonathan

“Hear my prayer, Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.” Psalm 86:6-7 (NIV)

Hazelwood: Hear me Lord and answer! by Donald Corbett

“Hear me, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.” Psalm 86: 1 (NIV)

A few days ago, I had the honour and privilege to share God’s word with you. We talked about prayer, and how we might approach God in a more intimate way. Prayer is such a critical part of our Christian walk, and prayer is so needed these days. We know that we should pray. The Bible says “pray continually.” That almost seems to make it an obligation. Prayer should never feel to be an obligation, but rather a joy, a privilege. “What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer!”

Even though we know that prayer is our means of talking with God, how often do we wonder: Why didn’t God answer?

Sometimes God is actually answering our prayers when we don’t realize it. We think we know what we need and are expecting it. However God’s answer might be “No” or “Wait.”

Why?

Because God sees the whole picture, and sometimes He lovingly refuses to give us exactly what we request, because He knows it isn’t according to His perfect plan. So perhaps he has answered, and we simply didn’t notice. It begs the question, “How does God speak to us?”

“For God does speak — now one way, now another — though no one perceives it.” Job 33: 14 (NIV)

God speaks to us through Scripture. Scripture is pretty clear when it comes to learning what is right and what is wrong in God’s eyes. It’s usually only when we are looking for an “out” that we “discover” an ambiguity that works to our advantage. 2 Timothy 3: 16-17 (NIV) says, “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” God wants us to grow in His righteousness, and we should never allow anything, or anyone, to take the place of the Bible as the way-post in our lives.

God also speaks to us in nature. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.*” **Genesis 1: 1-3 (NIV).** These three verses describe God creating an incredibly complex universe that is absolutely miraculous in its structure, order and, most of all, its beauty. The Psalmist continuously praises the glory of God in creation – Psalm 8 being one of my favourite examples. In the New Testament, Paul writes, “*For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*” **Romans 1:20 (NIV).** Just look at His works in the world around you and you cannot help but sense God speaking to you.

God speaks through His Son, Jesus Christ. I cannot explain this any better than a direct quote from the Bible. I invite you to read the opening lines of the book of Hebrews. “*In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,* ² *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.* ³ *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.* ⁴ *So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*” **Hebrews 1: 1-4 (NIV)**

God speaks to us by the Holy Spirit. Have you ever awoken with a clear answer, or way ahead for something that has been troubling you? Have you ever heard a quiet voice say, “STOP”; or “GO!”? Have you seemed suddenly so removed from a situation that you felt like an observer? That may well be God speaking to us by the Holy Spirit. Jesus did promise this would happen when he said, “*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*” John 14: 26 (NIV). By all means, listen to that inner voice, but, just in case, be sure to check it against Scripture. If it is, then God has spoken to you! Act accordingly.

If none of this seems to be right for you, might I suggest it’s time to pray? Come before God and talk to Him as a sinner, with tears in your eyes; come before God and talk to Him as a servant seeking to do His will; and most of all, climb into his lap as a child, as His child, feel his loving embrace, and talk to Him with all the love and adoration that you can muster.

God is speaking to you. He wants to forgive you as a sinner; He wants you to see the picture of what He has planned for you; He wants to tell you how much he loves you; and He wants to spend time with you.

“Hear my prayer, Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.” Psalm 86: 6-7 (NIV)

God bless.

Donald

MISSION MOMENT by Linda Clarke

You've heard of OOTC frequently over the Christmas season. The snowman has been in the narthex collecting warm accessories. 37 pairs of socks, 9 pairs of hand knitted mittens, 2 pairs of ski mitts, 1 scarf, 4 hats, 3 thermal long underwear tops and 4 thermal underwear bottoms were collected. The Christmas Eve loose offering and designated givings totaling \$484 was forwarded to OOTC. These donations are deeply appreciated. It is not a mission for which the church designates a specific annual monetary support so this generous practical support is so welcomed.

OOTC is a ministry run out of Knox Presbyterian Church downtown. Knox is well situated at the corner of Elgin and Lisgar to serve people down town who find themselves homeless or poor. Grace Church has partnered with Knox since 2007 providing volunteers on the 2nd Saturday of the month from November to March. In the early years, sometimes, after we finished serving, the volunteers would go to a restaurant or someone's home to socialize and have a meal together. Pre-pandemic, we were 15-20 volunteers who helped prepare, serve and clean up. Often we were able to sit, talk or pray with our guests who were unhurried to leave. We became familiar with 'the regulars'. Usually we would feed around 80 people. When the pandemic hit and indoor dining was prohibited, the OOTC ministry switched to takeaway meals. Designated teams for prep, kitchen duty, meal assembly, and outdoor greeters and meal distributors were established. 3 of us from Grace continued to help. Some Saturdays in the beginning of the pandemic we distributed 200 meal packages. The demand was so great that the program continued into the summer with the support of down town community groups and social agencies. Now, the number is 120-160 meals. Many of the Grace volunteers are seniors so understandably they stepped away during the pandemic. I want to express my gratitude to them for helping out for so many years.

Often the guests ask for winter clothing, thus the reason for the Christmas collection of hats, socks, long underwear, etc. The items were delivered on Jan. 14th and are available for distribution for those who need some warm clothing throughout the winter months. In the past there has been a big fundraiser music concert at Knox in the spring. I don't have details now but a poster will be placed on the community bulletin board usually in March or April to advertise the event if it's happening.

Recently, OOTC has shifted to a hybrid model of some take away meals and some indoor dining. They are still providing 120-160 meals every Saturday. We regularly provide 6 volunteers with past or present affiliation with Grace Church. If this ministry is of interest to you, please talk to Linda.

Note: After year end, an additional \$6050 was released from 2022 to pay towards the various missions we support in order to bring our mission contributions to be at least 10% of our revenue. This increased our deficit to just under \$22,000 which will be taken from the newly created Contingency Fund.

REFUGEE MOMENT by Joan Wilson

Last Thursday, Stu and I were honoured to be invited to the virtual citizenship ceremony for the first of Jean Bosco's family who came here through Grace's refugee ministry. Stephanie (the lady in red in the middle) and her daughter Ange (who was away at university so also virtual) both became Canadian citizens. In the 2 hour ceremony and process, about 168 people took the oath and sang O Canada. It was a very moving ceremony to see, and a good reminder for those of us born in Canada, that we are very lucky to be part of this country.



Two of the pics don't need much explanation. At the end of the ceremony, they said people could take pics beside the screen with the presiding judge and clerk. Jean Bosco slipped into one of the pics.



The group pic shows more of Jean Bosco's sisters (the 3 ladies standing, with Stephanie in the middle). The other 3 sisters have applied for their citizenship as well. The little girl is already Canadian, having been born here, her mother is the lady next to me. The woman holding the little girl is the cousin who was unofficially adopted by Jean Bosco's parents, and who then had to go through the PCC application process separately. The young man kneeling is also related to the family (I can't remember how!).

Joan



Fundraising Committee Update by Arlene Lamadeleine

This week was our first fundraising dinner. The GYG hosted a delicious spaghetti and meatball dinner with ceasar salad, garlic bread and a delicious array of desserts. They had punch, coffee and tea as well as serving pitchers of water on each table. The hall was beautifully decorated and featured tables of 2, 4, 6, one table of 7 and a table of 10 for the youth volunteers. This fundraiser benefitted both Camp Cherith and Grace. We heard a presentation by Joey from Camp Cherith including their plans to upgrade their kitchen and dining pavilion, "Wilkie", which will also include more meeting spaces and showers. The Grace family was recognized for being strong supporters and partners with the camp.



On top of all the great food, there were a variety of fun activities available. You could guess how many candies were in the jar (Congrats to Donna for being the closest! What will she do with all that candy? lol), suggest date night ideas that would be distributed to all participants or enjoy a card making station. There were assorted candy loot bags available for a donation and a photo booth with lots of sill props—both were a big hit. On each table was a



Bible Couples Quiz to see if you could match the husband and wife. We had a 4 way tie and Jacques Dalton won the tie breaker to win a prize. After dessert, we were challenged with some Valentine's trivia for a chance to play Plinko to win a variety of Valentine's day themed prizes.



A great time was had by all! Our next event is a Celtic dinner and concert with live music by Shabraque Celtic! Tickets are \$35 for dinner and concert or \$20 for just the concert or just the dinner and are now available for sale!



Let's Be Inclusive of Orthodoxy

December 29, 2022 by [Andy Cornell](#) – Shared with permission

Has “liberty of conscience and action” replaced “no divisive course” as the touchstone phrase in our polity?

Ministers, elders and deacons promise in our ordination vows to “follow no divisive course but to seek the peace and unity of Christ among your people” and the wider church. It’s widely quoted and tacitly accepted, even though we have no universal understanding of what it means in practice. One could argue that any effort to propose a change that would result in a division within the fold would be included. But that didn’t stop General Assembly from redefining marriage in 2021, a decision which took a natural theological divide and formalized it. It’s been codified in Section 11 and Appendix ‘L’ of the Book of Forms. The mere presence of a clause within our polity which allows us to hold to one of two roads, to the exclusion of the other, is in of itself, a legalization of division.

(Before I go any further, it needs to be stated clearly, once again, that the issue here is not sexuality and marriage. Rather, it’s the theology which allows the reinterpretation or dismissal of scripture and the advancement of an agenda which is guided more by the desires of our human hearts than God’s high calling for human thought and behaviour.)

Liberty of conscience and action is the principle which is intended to allow competing theologies to coexist in the same church. The Clerks of Assembly issued an [opinion](#) on the matter in July 2019. The clerks rightly pointed to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which states: “God alone is the Lord of the conscience (XX.II).” Given our fallen state, the clerks recognized that people “sometimes adopt doctrines and commandments that might be contrary to God’s word. It’s possible for us, and others, to misunderstand or misinterpret God’s word and will. Because of that possibility, nothing should interfere with an individual’s liberty to align their conscience with God’s word and will.” All good. Potentially divisive church doctrine and law need to include generous liberty of conscience.

How then, is liberty of conscience and action being applied on the playing field? So far, not so good. Witness the new section in the PCC’s [guidelines for presbyteries, interim moderators and search committees](#) which state that “The presbytery shall instruct interim moderators when proceeding to a call to give equal consideration to LGBTQI2+ candidates ... Any who, in the view of their presbytery, have exhibited discriminatory behaviour toward LGBTQI2+ individuals shall not be appointed interim moderators.” What exactly does it mean by “discriminatory behaviour”? I reached out to the clerks for their opinion.[\[i\]](#)

The clerks responded at length.[\[ii\]](#) The key statement: “Discriminatory behaviour in this context, is behaviour which contravenes the decisions of the General Assembly regarding the definitions of marriage and the ordination, induction and installation of people who identify as LGBTQI. Liberty of conscience and action is granted to those members of presbytery who choose not to participate in the ordination, induction or installation of LGBTQI persons. However, liberty of conscience and action does not extend to actively speaking out against or denying the right of any qualified individual to be considered for ordination, induction or installation into church office.”

The key words in my mind are “actively speaking out against.” Does this imply that we are not to be vocally opposed to the new doctrine? Or does it mean we shouldn’t speak out against the suitability of specific individuals? It’s not clear.

The larger issue is the new section itself, which specifies LGBTQI2+ communities. That’s fine. But what’s missing is the other side. If we truly hold to parallel definitions and are called to uphold liberty of conscience and action, should we not also extend protection to those who hold to traditional standards? The new clause appears to favour one definition over the other. It’s tunnel vision.

Renewal Fellowship’s board of directors had a healthy conversation over this matter recently. In the words of one member: what we now have is “not an inclusive definition; in fact, it’s discrimination in itself.” Said another: “As someone in orthodoxy, I’m a second-class citizen; I’m feeling muzzled. If I believe someone is unfit for ministry (due to lifestyle choice), I discriminate.” In practical terms, “They’re favouring one child over another.”

If we are to truly exercise liberty of conscience and action, then this section *should* state: “The presbytery shall instruct interim moderators when proceeding to a call to give equal consideration to *all candidates*. Any who, in the view of their presbytery, have exhibited discriminatory behaviour toward LGBTQI2+ individuals *or have exhibited discriminatory behaviour towards those who adhere to traditional Biblical orthodoxy* shall not be appointed interim moderators.”

See the big picture? Rather than tunnel vision skewed toward a revisionist mindset, let’s widen our view be truly inclusive of all valid points of view. If we are to hold to true liberty, let’s walk the talk.

While those who adhere to biblical orthodoxy are increasingly marginalized, little is being done to counter the political shift towards full inclusion. As long as we hold to a true interpretation and application of liberty of conscience and action, then the PCC cannot be an affirming denomination, contrary to what GA decided by a relatively slim 58 per cent majority in 2019.

Until this discriminatory guideline is fixed – either by the denominational staff or by the action of General Assembly – I pray that the theological leaning of a congregation will be presbytery’s primary consideration when appointing an interim moderator.

I also pray that presbyters see these guidelines as just that: *guidelines* – *not law*. Because they are an official publication of the PCC, they carry some weight and some presbyters will see this as Gospel and interpret it narrowly.

As interim moderator overseeing a search a few years ago for a traditional congregation, I presented every application to the search committee. Yes, even those from candidates who were in far left field. I allowed the search committee to discern. I know that there are interim mods who do not hold to the same theology as the congregation. I would hope that they would respect the wishes of the congregation and not weed out candidates who are not to their liking.

True liberty allows freedom of choice.

Let's Be Inclusive of Orthodoxy—continued:

December 29, 2022 by [Andy Cornell](#) – Shared with permission

Let's talk about that at the next Renewal Café, a Zoom community which meets occasionally to share our frustrations and joys, our good news and our challenges – all in a safe space. It's not in person, but it's something.

The next Café takes place Thursday, January 12: 2:30 p.m. Newfoundland; 2:00 p.m. Atlantic; 1:00 p.m. Eastern; 12:00 noon Central; 11:00 a.m. Mountain; 10:00 a.m. Pacific.

Seating is limited so register early. Depending on the response, we may offer an additional time. RSVP at <renewalfellowshipccc@gmail.com> and we'll send you the link.

[i] The exact text: 1. What would constitute “discriminatory behaviour”? 2. Interpreting the words “shall not” — does this mean presbytery is legally bound to this guideline or is it just advice? 3. Depending on the responses to Q1 and Q2 — I might ask: what about those who are deemed to have demonstrated “discriminatory” behaviour who are currently appointed as interim mods — should presbytery rescind their appointments and find suitable replacements?

[ii] Here is the full text: “In response to your questions regarding the recent additions to the Calling a Minister: Guidelines for Presbyteries, Interim Moderators and Search Committees, I offer these comments. The Church holds two parallel and protected definitions of marriage, permitting people to choose to understand marriage either as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or as a covenant relationship between two adult people. This decision provides congregations, sessions, ruling and teaching elders with liberty of conscience and action on marriage. Additionally, the Church has agreed that congregations and presbyteries may call and ordain as ministers and elect and ordain as ruling elders LGBTQI persons (married or single) with the provision that liberty of conscience and action regarding participation in ordinations, inductions and installations be granted to ministers and ruling elders. Holding any one of the definitions of marriage that the church has approved and exercising liberty of conscience and action regarding participation in marriages, ordinations, inductions and installations is not, of course, discriminatory behaviour in the context of the decisions of the General Assembly or of Calling a Minister: Guidelines for Presbyteries, Interim Moderators and Search Committees. Discriminatory behaviour in this context, is behaviour which contravenes the decisions of the General Assembly regarding the definitions of marriage and the ordination, induction and installation of people who identify as LGBTQI. Liberty of conscience and action is granted to those members of presbytery who choose not to participate in the ordination, induction or installation of LGBTQI persons. However, liberty of conscience and action does not extend to actively speaking out against or denying the right of any qualified individual to be considered for ordination, induction or installation into church office. Liberty of conscience and action cannot be claimed so as to not recognize the validity of ordination, induction or installation to church office once that ordination, induction or installation has been duly granted. The presbytery is bound within the polity and doctrine of The Presbyterian Church in Canada to take steps to ensure that the decisions of the General Assembly are upheld and honoured. The presbytery would naturally trust its ministers to act with integrity as interim moderators regardless of their personal views and expect them to place the applications and personal profiles of all eligible candidates before search committees for consideration. If a presbytery has reasonable grounds to believe a minister may not be able to discharge the duties and responsibilities of interim moderator in a pastoral and non-discriminatory way, presbyteries should not consider that minister as a possible interim moderator or reconsider their appointment. Discerning who shall be named an interim moderator is within the presbytery's power and responsibility and is always to be exercised with care and pastoral concern.

Kids Corner

FEBRUARY
2023

Kids Club had a "Love" themed event February 10th with 7 kids and 5 adults which made for a great night! We enjoyed playing some games with heart-shaped bean bags (Thanks Margaret!), make some beautiful cards, talked about God's love, enjoyed a delicious snack packed in individual bags of popcorn and various candies and chocolate (Thanks Anne!) then finished the night with a game of hide and seek. A big thank you to Cyndi, Margaret, Anne and Joan who came out and supervised the

kids and made it possible for some kids to make cards while others enjoyed some foosball instead. Having more adults made it a fun and more relaxing night for all!

Sunday School is using the "Might Message" Bible stories that come with everything including a lesson, craft, games, handout for parents, other activities and a certificate of completion! A super easy set up for anyone interested in

helping with Sunday School.

If you would like to be a part of children's ministry, we would be happy to have you join our team! Whether you would like to help with teaching, supervision, planning, snacks, games, singing, or to share another gift/talent, please talk to Tomm Kuiperij (lead elder), Jan Rueger, or myself for more info.

Arlene

SALVAGER

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.
— Luke 19:10

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Thanks to Julie Seibe 11-11-2003

WHY DON'T YOU STOP WONDERING WHAT'S
WRONG WITH THE WORLD AND READ THE MANUAL



GOOD GRACIOUS



Grace's Ministry Groups

The seven functional groups and there leaders are:

1. Worship Coordination: Jacques Dalton
2. Discipleship: Tomm Kuiperi
3. Pastoral Care: Anne Houston Assistant: Yohanna Kimoun
4. Faith Sharing: Linda Clarke Assistant: Dounia Keda
5. Temporal Support: Shirley Blank Joan Wilson
6. Personnel Support: Donna Dawson
7. Communication and Coordination Donald Corbett



Opportunities to Serve!

- **Children's ministry:** We need planners, craft and game organizers, teachers, assistant teachers. There are lots of ways you can help! We also appreciate your prayers.
- **Fundraising Committee:** looking for people to help plan, setup, take down, cook, and participate! Talk to Linda, Lauren or Arlene for more info.
- **Coffee Hosts:** We need teams of 2 to prepare coffee to enjoy fellowship time together after the service! We hope to have enough teams so everyone takes a turn once every 2 months. You just got to try the commercial dishwasher!
- **Meal Coordinator** to coordinate meals for families in crisis, grief, illness, etc. There is a list of volunteers that are willing to make food. Someone to help Anne Houston with the organizing would be awesome!

Contact the church office for more information on how you can help!
admin@graceorleans.ca or by phone at 613-824-9260.