

Seeking Grace & Clarity



September 2026



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Message from The Minister

Christian Nationalism – Why is it dangerous and anti-Christ?

We hear themes of Christian Nationalism from neighbours to the south and unfortunately, here in Alberta. As Christians, we need to identify it and know how to correct those who seek to be faithful followers of Christ. The following is an excerpt from The Presbyterian Church in Canada's website entitled:

A Reflection on the Themes in the Cycle of the Christian Year: Reign of Christ to Epiphany 2025/2026.

I find it helpful. I hope it will be helpful to you as well.

“Christian Nationalism is an ideology that privileges specific Christians and expressions of Christianity in law and practice to dominate political and cultural spheres. Christian Nationalism distorts the gospel message by connecting itself with militarism, rampant capitalism, oppression, exclusion, cruelty, and intolerance in the name of God. It is often expressed through racist, sexist, and colonialist narratives and actions. Christian Nationalism aligns with wealth, power, and exclusion, contrasting with the teachings and actions of Jesus, who proclaimed, “good news to the poor,” “liberty to the captives,” “sight to the blind,” and “freedom to the oppressed.”

Christian Nationalism frequently appropriates scripture to bolster its authority. Its adherents, through ignorance or ambition, fail to recognize that the teachings of Jesus, and indeed, much of the biblical writings, are voiced by those who are enslaved or who lived under the rule and authority of a foreign and occupying power. So, challenges or condemnations from those writings come from the ranks of the powerless, those without standing, and those who are not able to dominate others. We observe that Jesus' disciples were eager to compel him to assume the mantle of authority so that he might challenge the powerful who oppressed them. But Mark's gospel shows Jesus' resistance to that notion and exercise of raw power.

The church is called to seek first the Kingdom or the Commonwealth of God, not to make the power and politics of the kingdoms and nations of the world into gods. The reign of God that Jesus preaches is a very different kind of society from the world envisioned by Christian Nationalists. In *The Blue Mountains of China*, Rudy Wiebe writes:

Jesus says in his society there is a new way for [people] to live: you show wisdom, by trusting people; you handle leadership, by serving; you handle offenders, by forgiving; you handle enemies, by loving; and you handle violence by suffering. In fact, you have a new attitude towards everything, towards everybody. Towards nature, towards the state in which you happen to live, towards women, towards slaves, towards all and every single thing.

There are times when the church is moved to contradict the principalities and powers of the world and, as the church affirms in [Living Faith](#), to strive to protect people, reject discrimination, change customs and practices that oppress others, and oppose everything that destroys human dignity.

Jesus rejected the human tendency towards the appropriation of power. His disciples' desire for a king who would put them in power was summarily dismissed. Peter's adverse reaction to Jesus' prediction that he would suffer and die at the hands of the powerful evoked Jesus' stinging reply, "Get behind me, Satan." As 21st century Christians in North America, we find ourselves in a radically different socio-political position than Jesus and his followers did. Our beliefs do not put our lives at risk. Our voices are part of the mainstream, if not dominant in some spheres of North American culture. We must not become so enamoured with our potency—or afraid of our increasingly cultural irrelevance—that we convince ourselves that other voices should be silenced. That is where Christian Nationalism leads, and it is antithetical to the voices from the margins that we revere in the scriptures.

There are times when the church must examine itself and stand up to and speak out against certain expressions of the Christian faith and use of scripture that are marked by sin, especially when those expressions inspire violence, hatred and cruelty. Dr Allyson Carr, of the Life and Mission Agency, wrote that "In these difficult times...Christians have choices about whom and what to support, and we will be judged by the fruit we produce. As disciples, it is not political and cultural power or authority that we should be seeking, but rather that service Jesus showed in his ministry." ([Presbyterian Connection, Issue 33, Spring 2025](#)). The cross of Jesus Christ and the flags and patriotic symbols of nations often go in different directions. When they do, the church and its people are called to decide which they will follow."

The Life and Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church in Canada brought forward a report about Christian Nationalism for the General Assembly to consider at their 2026 annual meeting. An article in the [Summer 2026 edition of Presbyterian Connection, p. 12 and 13](#) is adapted from that report.

Christian Nationalism is likely the greatest lie that is being used to dismantle "love of neighbour" in North America, using the name of our Lord as justification for cruelty. Any action or ideology that targets the "least" of these to wield power against them rather than FOR them, is NOT Christ-like. May we be faithful followers of Jesus by refusing to be complicit through our silence. We can start by asking, "Who does this (action, attitude or policy) benefit?" and "Does that sound like Jesus?"

*Together in following Christ,
Rev. Laurie McKay*

September Calendar

Fall 2026 Program Start Dates

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	31 Harmony Yoga (classes resume 10am & 5pm – IH)	1 Griefshare (12:30pm – LF, until Nov 24)	2 Side by Side (10am orientation session – KEL) Bell Choir (6:30pm – UR)	3 Heritage Seniors (9:30am – TH) Calgary Women's Chorus (1pm – TH)	4	5
6	7 Labour Day	8	9 Side by Side (9am – KEL)	10 St. A's Choir (7pm – TH)	11	12
13	14 Beavers Scouts (6pm – UR)	15 Cubs Scouts (6:15pm – UR)	16 The Edge (2:30pm – KEL)	17	18 Youth Group (7pm – Faith Finders)	19
20 Church School Bible Study (11:30am – TH)	21	22 Uke Group (10:30am – KEL)	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation			

David Townsend - Elder Profile

I started attending church at St. Paul's United in Fredericton, New Brunswick. I drifted away in my teenage years but returned about 15 years later after moving to Calgary. I met my wife, Marlyn, on our building condo board, and we met up again at Wesley United, a downtown Calgary church. We were married at Wesley in 1994. Marlyn was the church secretary there for several years, and I served on the church board in various roles.



Unfortunately, Wesley United did not have enough members to maintain the church. It closed about 2002 and is now used by the Opera Society. Marlyn and I then found Lakeview United where we attended for about ten years. We found worship at Lakeview fulfilling and enjoyed our time there, however our long-time minister retired. We did not always agree with all the national church pronouncements and decided it was time to move on.

We looked around for about a year and finally landed at St. Andrew's about 2013. It has been our church home ever since. We sensed an immediate connection and knew the Rowses and the late Bob Sadler through Rotary so that helped our transition.

My parents were the first influence in my faith journey and in later years, I enjoyed discussing religion with Marlyn's mom. Although some of her views would be considered outdated in today's world, her strength of character and faith were always inspiring.

As an accountant, I was asked to become involved in the financial affairs of the church. I have branched out in the last few years and really enjoy writing articles and talking to members through volunteering with ConnXions.

Because I am new to the role of elder, it may be too soon to offer advice. I do believe anyone considering the role should always be prepared to listen to others, keep an open mind and try to focus on the big picture.

As far as challenges and opportunities, St. Andrew's is a large diverse congregation, and we all have our own personal experiences and beliefs. Not everyone will agree on everything, especially when it comes to complex social issues like the ones we are facing today.

I have always been impressed by the quality and shared commitment of the St. Andrew's people. I know that anyone reading this article has the best interests of St. Andrew's at heart and will continue to make our church better now and for the future.

A little known fact about myself, my sister (Alyson Townsend) is a cabinet minister in the provincial government in N.B. I am very proud of her but we do not always agree on her politics.



Roving Reporter

Ribbon Skirt Workshop

With the blessing of the Indigenous Relations team, and funding from the Legacy fund, a group of over 20 participants from St. Andrew's sewed their own ribbon skirts with the guidance of Kathy Bear and Dr. Teresa Miles on Saturday, May 23, 2026.

Deanne Barrett works with Teresa, who teaches Indigenous Education at St. Mary's University. Teresa and Kathy hosted a ribbon skirt making workshop at St. Mary's University where Deanne first learned to make a ribbon skirt. Teresa and Kathy generously agreed to bring the workshop to St. Andrew's.

As is customary, Teresa and Kathy were thanked for sharing their knowledge with us and were each given tobacco and a prayer shawl which was hand made by members of the Prayer Shawl Ministry.

Workshop participants learned how to cut the fabric based on their own body measurements, and Shae Williams from Heritage Park taught us her trick for using a glue stick to secure the ribbons onto the fabric before sewing.

This was a multi-generational event, with participants ranging in age from 1 to 75 years old with a number of "three generations" families of women in attendance including Jennifer and Sarah Stolee and Barbara MacFarlane, Deanne and Inara Barrett and Pat Lomheim, Shona and Rylee Vandrascio and Inge Murray. What a powerful reminder of how we are learning and growing together as the body of Christ and the power of inter-generational and intercultural joy and memory-making!





Many of the participants worked on their skirts later that day so that they could wear their skirts to church the very next day for a special service led by Rev. Layne Kilbreath and Alphonse Napoose.

We are honoured to learn to make ribbon skirts as an act of friendship and reconciliation, and we wear them as a symbol of our desire to move forward together in a good way.

Respectfully submitted, Deanne Barrett



RECONCILIATION JOURNEY WALK



SEPTEMBER 19, 2026

LOCATION: CALGARY - WEASELHEAD SOUTH GLENMORE PARK
QUINTERRA LEGACY GARDEN (PARKING VIA 90 AVE & 24 ST SW)

SCAN TO REGISTER



A Journey to Friendship.

**ELDERS
AND OTHER
SPIRITUAL
CARE ON-SITE**



WALK AS WE

EDUCATION | FRIENDSHIP | ACTION

**THE ROAD
CHURCH**



**POWERING
POSSIBILITY**



**DIACONAL
MINISTRIES
CANADA**



**Samson
Community Wellness**



Stampede Breakfast

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I believe the last Stampede Breakfast held at St. Andrew's was in July 2019. After that came COVID and the Men's Group became somewhat inactive. Over the past couple of years, the Men's Group has regained footing and are moving forward with a number of initiatives.

On July 5, the Men's Group once again hosted a Stampede Breakfast. The event was a huge success with approximately 90 participants. Prizes were awarded for best western attire to the following...

Eloise Dolan (youth), Maureen Pelz (female), Jamie Hodge and Duane Tritter (male).

Many who attended were dressed in western wear, it was difficult to pick winners. We appreciate everyone's participation and support.

See y'all next year,
Terry Basaraba



**MEN'S
GROUP**



A Conversation with James Tut

Secretary of the St. Andrew's Sudanese Congregation



I contacted James originally to get some background information for an article on the Sudanese congregation at St. Andrew's. However, over the course of several conversations and e-mails, we also discussed his journey to Calgary and his commitments to his church, the Nuer community and beyond. I found his story interesting and inspiring.

Personal Journey

After leaving South Sudan, James spent four years in a settlement camp in Uganda before arriving in Canada in July 2004. His uncle, Peter Gatdet, St. Andrew's Sudanese evangelist, helped arrange his move to Canada. James' mother who is Peter's sister, now lives in Ethiopia.

At Bow Valley College, he completed high school and became involved in student life, serving as Vice-President of Student Life for the Bow Valley College Students' Association and later being chosen as student valedictorian. He went on to earn a diploma in finance and an undergraduate degree in management from SAIT. Today, he is completing an online MBA while working full time and raising five children, the youngest of whom is about three years old.

St. Andrew's holds a special place in James' family story. He became engaged in 2012, though his wife did not arrive in Calgary until October 2015. He remembers her arrival with great fondness. After meeting her at the airport, they drove directly to St. Andrew's, where the church community had gathered to welcome her and share cake. It was the first place in Canada where she tasted Canadian water and food, making the congregation part of their very first memories together in Calgary.

James' story of faith and perseverance is remarkable but not unusual among those in the St. Andrew's Sudanese community.

Sudanese Congregational Leadership and Community

James also described the leadership structure of the St. Andrew's Sudanese congregation. The church has five ruling elders, including Thomas, who was recently ordained. As secretary, James is responsible for communication within and beyond the congregation, including preparing annual reports and meeting minutes. Peter Gatdet serves as evangelist and oversees church administration.

Many Nuer-speaking Christians from other congregations attended Thomas' ordination to welcome and support him. Some even travelled from Edmonton, which is a common expression of connection and support within the Nuer community.

St. Andrew's Sudanese congregation has about eighty Nuer-speaking members, including approximately thirty-five children in Sunday school. The congregation is notably generous, recently contributing funds to purchase colourful choir gowns and Sunday school T-shirts from Kenya.

James' Leadership Beyond St. Andrew's Sudanese Congregation

In addition to serving as secretary of the Sudanese congregation, James was Alberta Representative for the North American Nuer Christian Youth for Peace and Development for two years. This non-denominational organization brings together about five hundred Nuer-speaking Christians and regularly holds conferences in different cities across North America.

He served as conference coordinator when the organization held its annual gathering in Calgary in July 2022. More recently, the July 3–5 conference took place in Minnesota, drawing more than thirty participants from Alberta. Some travelled by air, while others made the long trip by van, reflecting the strength of connection across the wider Nuer Christian community.

James has also founded an organization called the Global Haven Foundation, which has a guiding message of “Restoring Hope, Building Community, Changing Lives.” We hope to hear more about this from James in a future article.

Sudanese Congregational Life and Worship

The war in South Sudan has affected every member of the congregation, leaving many deeply concerned for family, friends, and communities abroad. James noted that Nuer-speaking people have faced targeted violence, danger, and hardship in recent years. Even so, St. Andrew's Sudanese members remain resourceful and resilient, continuing to support loved ones whenever they can.

Sudanese worship at St. Andrew's is conducted in the native Nuer language although English is spoken at times for the benefit of visitors. Music is an integral part of Sudanese worship and attendees enjoy lively singing and rhythms. These are led by talented, self-taught musicians, many of whom are invited to larger events across North America.

The Sudanese congregation has been part of St. Andrew's church community since 1998. St. Andrew's is proud of its relationship and support for this dedicated, resourceful, and courageous group.

Submitted by David Townsend



Ladies Guild



The Ladies Guild finished our year in June when a total of 19 members and guests enjoyed lunch at Chianti's in Willowpark Village on our regular meeting day – the second Tuesday of the month.

During the summer months our ministry continued by hosting two receptions following Celebration of Life services, one in July for the late Dolly Menzies, and one in August for the late Bill Stewart.

We're now looking forward to our first meeting of the 26/27 church year on Tuesday September 8 at 1:30 p.m. in the Karl English lounge. This will be a business meeting and you can be assured that the topic of the upcoming Christmas Bazaar – scheduled for Saturday, November 14th - will be on the agenda! All are invited to attend and enjoy tea with us at the beginning of the meeting.

In the June/July ConnXions we asked you to keep in mind the books, puzzles and treasures you're willing to part with so someone else may enjoy them. Also, as you tend your garden or visit the wonderful markets at this time of year, remember that the fruits of our labours – turned into jams and jellies, pickles and preserves - are always sought after items in our bake room. And we're always grateful to have our wide mouth, 500ml Christmas pudding jars and rings returned so we can fill them again for you this year!

There will be much more on the Bazaar later!

Sylvia Shaw

Our deadline for the next ConnXions is September 15th !



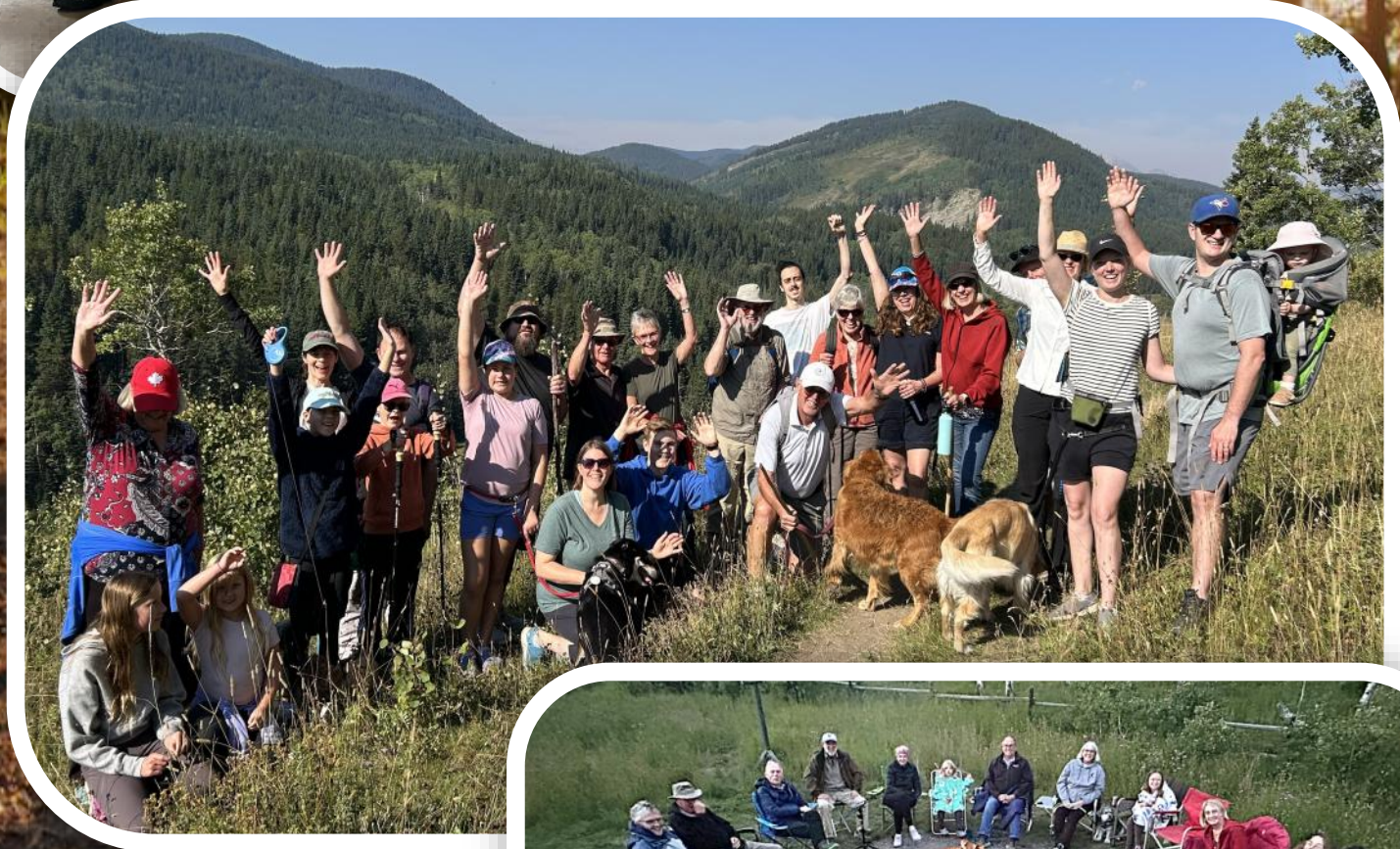
Summer Reflections



Good Bye Summer.

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is published every 2 months.
We welcome articles for the next issue
to be submitted by September 15th to:
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