

# inCONTACT

with Alberta and Northwest Conference

DECEMBER 2018

## Gaetz Memorial United's Live Nativity

Gaetz Memorial United, located in downtown Red Deer, has held a live nativity on the church lawn for several years. When the City of Red Deer conducts their "Lights the Night" Festival in mid-November, the youth from the congregation, along with several animals, provide a chance to see the Christmas spirit in action. In addition to being a huge attraction, it has proven to be meaningful for both the youth and the public as a reminder of celebrating the season with the Christ child.



*Gaetz Memorial United's Live Nativity*

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# Spirit Ride 2018

Three years ago, I began to wonder about what a sabbatical could look like for myself and the folks I serve with at St. Andrew's in Cochrane Alberta. For years, I had listened with great interest to my colleagues' accounts of their sabbatical experiences—those in particular who had a pilgrimage component. I wanted my own to be a life giving, transformative experience and I wanted to share it with Chris, my spouse of 38 years.



*Ray Goodship in front of the Manitoba welcome sign*

I have many hobbies and interests — perhaps too many — yet two of them, cycling and camping, fit well into the pilgrimage theme. The idea of cycling across Canada started to take shape as a way of honouring the rare privilege that we in ministry have of qualifying for sabbaticals. I love to preach so the possibility of including that in the schedule was very exciting. As my sabbatical started to take shape, the United Church of Canada was well into the long process of visioning and shaping its future. Even as the church was wondering about how to be sustainable and relevant, God is alive and well in our communities.

Thanks to the wonderful support of our congregation, friends and family, and three years of planning, training, learning and dreaming, we hit the road on June 1, 2018. On June 4<sup>th</sup> I preached at Ladner United Church; the first of thirteen sermons I would preach along my journey. I would then go on to record and then share with St. Andrew's to be integrated into their services a few weeks later. On September 4<sup>th</sup>, after 6850 kilometers, two flat tires, and seeing the sights of eight of the ten provinces, we arrived at Sydney, Nova Scotia—dipping my front tire into the Atlantic Ocean.

Chris and I are both still processing all the things we learned and experienced—maybe we should co-author a book! For now, I can share some amazing gifts I received. We can be very comfortable and happy living in 187 square feet of space—at least in the summer. My body has a lot of capacity; I continued to get more fit and healthy as the trip unfolded. I can eat peanut butter sandwiches for lunch daily and be very happy about it. There is nothing more wonderful than having someone you love waiting for you to come home at the end of the day. Canada is humungous, and Canadians are lovely—even truckers. Determination and showing up every day are more important than talent and skill. And my love of the church has deepened and God is indeed, alive and well.

— Ray Goodship, *St Andrew's United, Cochrane*

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## South Alberta Presbytery's Final Meeting

South Alberta Presbytery held its final meeting on November 21<sup>st</sup> from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Knox United Church in Taber where the presbytery had met for several years. This meeting included an expression of appreciation to the Knox United Catering Committee for the delicious snacks and meals they have provided for the delegates

over the years and concluded with worship, including the sacrament of communion.

Following the meeting, presbytery delegates, past and present, spouses included, gathered in the Conference Room at Taber's Luigi's Restaurant for a Presbytery Celebration Social. This celebration included a program of singing,

special music, shared presbytery memories, visiting and a roast beef dinner. All who have been part of South Alberta Presbytery were invited to join in this final celebration.

— Sheila McLeod, *Past Chair of South Alberta Presbytery*

# Boost for the Journey 2: Moving Forward in Truth & Reconciliation

I enjoyed a weekend of discovery at Kamp Kiwanis near Bragg Creek, October 26-28, sponsored by Alberta & Northwest Conference. Forty-five dedicated volunteer congregational witnesses and guests from around the province, focused on mutual issues with Indigenous peoples on our journey of reconciliation. We were grateful for the opportunity to make personal connections, to share worship and resources and grow in understanding and knowledge.

The weekend began with the viewing of a 32-minute movie called "Reserve 107". It charts a settler community in Saskatchewan recognizing a land claim by a dispossessed group of Cree. This interesting movie is available at <https://www.reserve107thefilm.com> and comes with a study guide.

Saturday morning, we joined in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise. This is one of the best ways to understand the deprivation and injustice suffered by Indigenous peoples. Many of us brought along a blanket and were part of a lengthy debriefing afterwards. This sharing session can be stressful, but it is a necessary and rewarding part of the event. The exercise works best with Aboriginal participants and we were honoured to have leadership from Elder Marilyn Shingoose of Calgary. KAIROS can arrange for a qualified



leader to hold a Blanket Exercise in your facility.

We heard highlights from GC 43 in Oshawa this past summer, from commissioners who attended. We learned of new self determination structures by Indigenous peoples within the United Church of Canada. With the United Church adoption of the "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", a National Indigenous Elders Council is to be formed and will take charge of their own affairs and their own ministry training. Aboriginal church leaders presented the General Council meeting with a document called "Caretakers of our Indigenous Circle: Calls to the Church". The document calls for a change to a more respectful relationship, and it was adopted almost unanimously by the court. In table groups we spent time discussing this ground-breaking document of nine issues.

In the evening we celebrated with drums, a dancing circle and learned several songs. We were led by Metis member Don Fraser, who wore his traditional sash and makes his own drums. His display table was one of several set up around the venue.

On this, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Church Apology to the former students of the church run Residential Schools and to their families and communities, committee member the Right Rev Bill Phipps read the document he presented to them in 1998. He was Moderator of our church at the time.

We hope congregational witnesses return to their communities with renewed energy for the reconciliation journey with local Aboriginal groups. Is your church ready to appoint a Congregational Witness? Call the Conference office to register and be part of our ongoing efforts.

—Gerry Dyck



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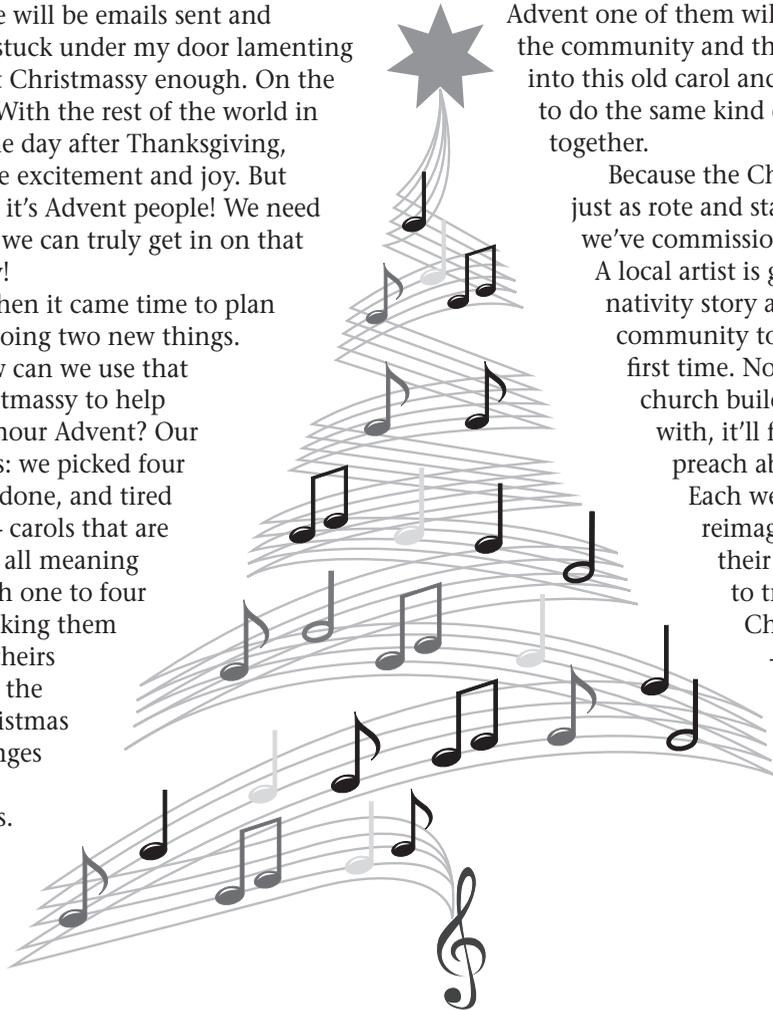
# Red Deer Lake United's Changes to Advent

Every January there will be emails sent and anonymous notes stuck under my door lamenting how Advent wasn't Christmassy enough. On the one hand, I get it. With the rest of the world in Christmas mode the day after Thanksgiving, they want in on the excitement and joy. But on the other hand, it's Advent people! We need to get ready before we can truly get in on that excitement and joy!

So, this year when it came time to plan for Advent, we're doing two new things.

We asked "how can we use that desire for the Christmassy to help people actually honour Advent? Our answer became this: we picked four of the stalest, over-done, and tired Christmas carols — carols that are so rote they've lost all meaning — and we gave each one to four different people, asking them to reflect on what their says to them about the significance of Christmas and what that changes about how they'll celebrate Christmas.

Each Sunday throughout



Advent one of them will share their answers with the community and then, with new life breathed into this old carol and with the encouragement to do the same kind of reflection, we'll all sing it together.

Because the Christmas story can feel just as rote and stale as some of the carols, we've commissioned a new nativity set.

A local artist is going to reimagine the nativity story and bring it to life for the community to experience again for the first time. Not only will it sit outside the church building for people to engage with, it'll form the basis of what I'll preach about throughout Advent.

Each week we'll look at one of the reimagined characters and ask how their story can help us get ready to truly embrace and celebrate Christmas.

—Rev. Nick Coates, Red Deer Lake United Church

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# The Winding Down of Calgary Presbytery

As December 31 looms over the horizon and Calgary Presbytery becomes part of Chinook Winds Region, decisions were made around how to honour all of the years of wonderful work by so many wonderful folks. So, why not have a celebration, a BIG one, and invite anyone who had any affiliation with the Presbytery to come and be a part of the festivity? Invitations have been sent out far and wide and plans were underway and an evening had been set aside, December 1<sup>st</sup>, at The Calgary Plaza Hotel & Conference Centre with a Traditional Holiday Dinner Buffet, music to be supplied by the Heebee JeeBees, memorabilia tables, special guests, and plenty of time set aside to share in the years

of memories of Calgary Presbytery and how everyone fit into the large web of family.

Also, to finish off the year, a Calgary Presbytery Dinner and Worship and De-Covenanting Service had been planned for December 18<sup>th</sup> at Parkdale United Church. The special guest for the evening was Michael Blair from General Council office.

We now prepare ourselves to reconfigure, to reinvent, to renew and to reintroduce the Spirit once again within Chinook Winds Region and the world beyond.

— Rev. Jope Langejans

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# Edmonton Presbytery Celebrates by Looking Back and Forward

On October 27, 2019 Edmonton Presbytery held its last meeting. It was a time to remember and give thanks for the many ways Christ's Life and Word have been followed by our congregations, outreach ministries and special initiatives. And it gave attendees an opportunity to look ahead.

Final reports from Presbytery committees and initiatives were adopted, including from Partners in Ministry, Intercultural Ministry, Ministry and Congregational Support Team and the Moving Forward with Reconciliation Project. Each report details life-enhancing, collaborative work – a testament to the variety and depth of service people have offered through Edmonton Presbytery and will continue to pursue as we move into new relationships within the regional structure.

In his final report, Edmonton Presbytery Chair Reverend Stuart Jackson highlighted Presbytery decisions and events of 2018; celebrating community links and partnerships, milestones reached, and faithful steps taken towards a vital future. Sherwood Park United was recognized as the 200<sup>th</sup> Affirming Ministry in the United Church of Canada. Presbytery affirmed guidelines for recognizing outreach ministries. In November, two covenanting services and a Presbytery Celebration dinner were yet to occur.

Looking to the future, Edmonton Presbytery approved the recommendations of a Council-appointed task group for the disposition of assets from the sale of two former Edmonton churches, Knox-Metropolitan and Pleasantview United Churches, whose congregations formally joined with Avonmore and Ritchie to form United on Whyte United Church. This will support the new congregation in its mission to be a vibrant, relevant and sustainable United Church of Canada presence in south Edmonton.

Many people were recognized for their long, devoted and diverse service to Edmonton Presbytery. Doug Main has been a continuous participant for 55 years. Marg May, Presbytery Secretary from 1988 to 2007, expressed her gratitude.

Three presentations highlighted the range of connections made, with impacts on the lives of many into the future; from local hospice care and youth empowerment to international justice and solidarity. This included a report from the University of Alberta FaithLift ministry chaplain and youth participants (supported by Edmonton Presbytery) who joined other youth from Vancouver for a three-week pilgrimage in Guatemala this past summer.



*Rev. Don Mayne reading scripture for the closing worship, with Rev. Stuart Jackson, Chair of Presbytery in the background. Don was recognised for being a member of Edmonton Presbytery for 56 years.  
Photographer: Katharine Moore*



*Xanthe Calon and FaithLift Chaplain Denise Davis-Taylor with souvenirs of their trip to Guatemala.  
Photographer: David Faber*

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*Continued on page 6*

# St. Paul's Transition

St. Paul Presbytery is holding a Gala to celebrate the work of the Presbytery in just a few days. I say that we'll be celebrating the work, but it may be more accurate to say that we'll be celebrating the relationships we've built. The evening will be filled with time to fondly remember the faithful work that so many people put in over so many years to make the United Church ministry in northeastern Alberta as vibrant as possible. And of course, we'll eat together, sing together, and pray together; we'll worship together in community as the Presbytery has done since its inception and as Christ's church has been doing for almost two thousand years.

At our last official meeting, the worship service included a time for presbyters to tell the stories that felt most meaningful to them as they reflected on the life of the Presbytery. People shared stories of difficulty, of conflict, of healing, and of hope, stories about

moving through challenges alongside people that you sometimes argued with but that you knew also cared deeply for you as a fellow member of the household of God. The stories all spoke of what it meant to be church.

In our new structure, the language of congregations and pastoral charges will give way to the language of communities of faith. As we move toward the closure of our Presbytery, there is a recognition that this closure is indeed an end for the particular community of faith we've become. And yet this ending is not filled with sorrow; it is filled with gratitude for the ways we have grown, filled with curiosity at what new life might emerge, and filled with hope because in the midst of some uncertainty we do know that we are all still connected in this church, and all still committed to living faithfully as followers in Christ's way.

— *Scott Reynolds*

## Merry Chrismon!

Several years ago, to celebrate Christmas, Okotoks United Church decided to forego the bulbs, baubles, and beads that usually decorate our church's Christmas tree. In their place, we felt it was important to keep Christ at the centre of our Christmas decorations. With thanks to American freelance artist Francis Kipps Spencer, who thought of Chrismon (Christ Monograms) as ornaments to help symbolize the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus, we have completely different Christmas trees in our church. Replacing the shiny baubles are white foam designs of crosses, anchors, fish, stars, doves, chalices, angels, hearts, butterflies, crèches, and more symbols of our faith. Making the ornaments and looking at the tree helps us to reflect on the life of Christ as the centre of the Christmas season.

— *Dean Salter, Okotoks United Church*



### ***Edmonton Presbytery Celebrates by Looking Back and Forward continued from page 5***

Attendees looked ahead to the promise and challenges of operating within the new Region 2 – encompassing 95 pastoral charges in northeastern British Columbia, Northern Alberta and The Northwest Territories. There are several familiar faces on its

Commission and new folks as well. We look forward to a new name and working in clusters and networks.

We closed with serving communion in table groups. Each person received the cup and bread with a few words of thanks

for what Edmonton Presbytery had meant to them. To which was offered thanks to God and declaration of “Holy Mystery, Holy Love.” A fitting way to move into the future, with hope, blessing and prayer.

# Northern Lights Presbytery Closing Meeting

It was a meeting like any other — the fall gathering of Northern Lights Presbytery. There were committee meetings, business, fundraising for M&S, worship, singing, reports, eating and wearing orange in solidarity with Residential School survivors. But extraordinary things were happening.

In plenary, Presbytery approved the recommendation of the finance committee for the sharing of revenue between the two regions of which our pastoral charges will be part. In worship, it was serendipitous that the lectionary for September 30 included selections from the Book of Esther. Mordecai's admonition to Esther — 'who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom "for such a time as this"— became the theme of our worship times. We began on Friday evening with a service of the sacrament of communion and ended with a celebratory Sunday morning worship. Shannon McCarthy and Earl Reaburn were present with, and for, us; bringing a sense of calm, giving us courage and creating enthusiasm for the future. That caught some of us by surprise. It was a meeting like any other, but more so.

Former members of Presbytery were invited to attend the banquet "Crossing the Threshold in Gratitude and Grace". We welcomed friends from Grimshaw, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Grande Prairie, and Grande Cache. Many others sent messages sharing memories and good wishes. Pat Bourque, our longtime staff resource, was our



guest speaker. Her remarks reminded us of ministry for which we are grateful and of places where we knew grace. Some comments from former members "It was a fine place to begin ministry and the fellowship and sense of mutual support that I experienced was very fine" (Curtis Tufts '81 to '85) "Your work...has been an example of grace filled community," (Liz Richards circa '01 to '05) "Presbytery meetings were not to be missed...I always embarked on the journey with a sense of delight. Who knew what would happen." (Rob Oliphant circa '92 to '98)

We thank the Grace Lutheran Congregation for catering to the banquet, providing a festive atmosphere and great food. We also thank South Peace Congregation for hosting this closing meeting of Presbytery and the retreat held before it.

We went from the banquet to evening worship through an arch and under the threshold. It was determined by our practical members that the threshold board might trip up someone if left on the floor. Later, the board, along with other items, was auctioned off for Mission and Service. It was a meeting like any other, with people caring and sharing.

In the quiet curve of the evening, Bev Brazier led worship. Picture Bev sitting on the step of the chancel, strumming her ukulele, accompanied by the Waldie girls leading us in singing "Years may come/ many years are still ahead. Years may go/ many years have passed" (Irish Rovers eat your hearts out!)

It was a meeting like any other. — "Who knew what would happen!"

*Submitted by Martha Dawson  
with a little help from her friends!!*

Despite attempts to have a report from every presbytery in this final edition of In Contact, we regret that we did not receive information before we went to print. It has been a pleasure to serve you for these many years with news from people and congregations all around this vast geography that was known as Alberta and Northwest Conference.

Blessings to everyone as you live in to the new structure. We know that the Holy One transcends time and space and structure and we know that we will always be beckoned into new ways of doing and being! Blessings to all of us on our journey!

— Rev. Peter Chynoweth

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# Virtual Visits and Seven Word Stories

When the Pastoral Oversight Committee of Northern Lights Presbytery met in February 2018, a need met an opportunity and produced a wonder! By coincidence of timing, we needed to arrange a Pastoral Oversight visit with practically every pastoral charge in the presbytery. We also wondered how that would be possible and what value it might serve as we moved into our Regional way of being. Northern Lights is the largest presbytery by geography in the whole United Church. It was obvious that we were not going to make it on tires. So, we came up with idea of doing Virtual Visits — and that's what happened.

On many Thursday evenings and/or Saturday mornings in April, May, June and September, the three committee members (from Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Moberly Lake) joined folks from the various and scattered congregations, pastoral charges and communities of faith online. We heard stories about the history of these places and what was unique about them in their mission and ministry in the places where they lived. What we expected was an opportunity to put into words and pictures a little profile that could be shared with new friends and neighbours in regions. That happened, but the committee members were by far the biggest beneficiaries of this little bit of blessing — as they got to share from sixty to ninety minutes with groups of people seated around a big screen (television or projected image) and talk about who and what they are about in God's mission in their part of the world and as part of The United Church of Canada in their towns, villages and cities.

One other blessing was the challenge to folks to come up with a "Seven Word Story" to describe themselves. The process was varied but the results were fun, and deep and faithful. Can we build community online? I know three people on a Northern Lights Presbytery Pastoral Oversight Committee that would say: "Yes, you can!"

— Rev. Peter Chynoweth

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## Last Issue

If you are not already aware, this is the last edition of In Contact.

Now I don't know what I'm going to do without having your wonderful stories, announcements and messages to fill my spare time.

It's fitting that the last edition is going to be published in December. December is a month for celebration, for reflection, for reaching out. But it inevitably leads to a brand-new year full of opportunities and new things to explore and do. This newsletter may have been a small part of everyone's lives, but it led me to celebrate, reflect, and reach out to all of you. It led me to develop skills that I can use in other parts of my life. And now I have a new road of opportunities to travel down. I'm interested to see where it all leads.

I would like to thank my fellow board members: Peter Chynoweth, Jope Langejans, Eileen McMorris, and Austin Fennell. Their kind words of encouragement as well as their guidance helped make this newsletter what it is. AS well, I would like to thank anyone who called, mailed or emailed with a story to tell. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing what everyone else was up to in the conference.

I guess it's on to the next adventure.

— Katy Jones, (former) editor of *In Contact*

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