

## Report of the Dean Greater Vancouver Conference

### **DEEPENING CONNECTIONS:**

From Family Systems theory, we have learned how churches and church leaders that are isolated and disconnected from the greater church can easily fall into patterns and habits that are not life-giving. Through Metro Vancouver Alliance's recent listening forum, I discovered that the most prevailing difficulty we experience in the Lower Mainland is social isolation. Churches and church leaders in the Greater Vancouver Conference are not immune to the impact of social isolation, which is reflected in the low attendance of monthly ministerial meetings, often due to competing meetings, busy schedules, and perhaps even apathy which results from discontentment or a lack of trust. In many ways, the Greater Vancouver Conference resembles its contextual culture: stressed, busy, and focused on our own church ministries. As a result, the Deans of the GVC have endeavored to intentionally carve out the space for deepening authentic connections amongst the clergy.

Clergy devote their time and energy to listening to the people they are called to serve, listening to God's Living Word in the scriptures and in our neighborhoods, and listening to the call of hope Christ Jesus has for our church. However, there are not always many opportunities for clergy to be listened to, and to receive pastoral care. Therefore, as Dean, my goal was to offer all pastors within the GVC an opportunity to be heard, and sought to meet with each pastor for a one-to-one visit. Based on the model of listening leadership, ministerial agendas reflected the desires and ideas that arose from these meetings: educational opportunities, promoting mutual accountability, and providing space for more authentic and vulnerable relationships. In addition, I offered the opportunity for pastors to connect with each other in pairs, experimenting in one-to-one's three times in 6 months, based on Parker Palmer's ideas of listening in a circle of trust: "No fixing, no saving, no advising, no setting each other straight." Our good intentions in 'helping each other' may result in our inadvertent dismissal of one another, and can further create a sense of isolation and invisibility; however listening, seeing, and acknowledging God's active presence in our lives honors our colleagues, creates deeper connections, and builds trust. Most GVC pastors were willing to partake in this practice, and some pastors were willing to continue the one-to-one listening practice even after the initial 6-month experiment, appreciating the opportunity to authentically share and learn more about their colleagues.

It is important to note that this is a continuation of the work that pastors and churches have already been doing to increase connections and share in mutual ministry, especially with special services and mission opportunities in New Westminster and Coquitlam, and in Burnaby and Vancouver. In addition, the Greater Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley Conferences, alongside LFVC Dean Christoph Reiners, continue to share in opportunities to learn together, connect, and support churches and pastors in mutual ministry.

### **MANY TRANSITIONS:**

This has been a busy term for the GVC, with many different transitions, and also an increased feminization within local church leadership. We welcomed two new pastors in their first call: Dorothy Chu and Carolina Glauster. We celebrated with several churches the installations for Timo Saarinen, Emmaus, Burnaby (July 2014); Jennifer Marlor, Gloria Dei, North Vancouver (Sept 2014); Dorothy Chu, Oakridge, Vancouver (Nov 2014); Algur Kaerma, St Peter's Estonian, Vancouver (Jan 2015, renewing his call for 5 years in Oct 2015); Carolina Glauster, Mt Olivet, North Vancouver (Aug 2015); and Thomas Keeley, Benediction, Tsswassan (Jan 2016). Nathan Fong, Grace, Burnaby was on sabbatical (Sept-Dec 2015), while Cliff Reinhardt,

Spirit of Life, Vancouver, and Marlys Moen, Mt Zion, New Westminster, will be on sabbatical this year. There will soon be pastors retiring from ministry and churches heading into more transition: Tim LeDrew, Our Saviour, Richmond (June 2016); and John Gram, Redeemer, Vancouver (Sept 2016). We are so thankful for the work of specialized, retired, and interim ministry, especially pastors Tim Dutcher-Walls, Vida Jaugelis, David Lefsrud, Katalina Janko, and Lorin Koss, whose ministry serves congregations in transition. We look forward to the formal addition of Brenda Nestegaard Paul and Faith Lutheran Church, Powell River, into the GVC at synod convention. Brenda planned the first Clergy Women's Retreat in the fall of 2015, and facilitated greater connections amongst the women in the GVC and the BC Synod.

### **SHARED MINISTRY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

Many clergy within the conference partake in shared Anglican-Lutheran ministry, either through formalized calls and/or interim ministry: Ian Nestegaard Paul, Sechelt; Vida Jaugelis, Ladner; Matthew Senf, Vancouver; Brian Heinrich, Vancouver. Various churches and pastors within the conference also connect intentionally with local Anglican ministries, especially in North Vancouver, Richmond, New Westminster, and Vancouver. Many churches have been strategically involved within the local community, running or helping with local food programs, sponsoring refugees, connecting with organizations like Metro Vancouver Alliance, building ecumenical relationships through concerts and consultations, and sharing visions and plans for Vancouver's housing crisis.

### **MISSIONAL RENEWAL**

This past year, there was also an influx of GVC participation in the missional renewal process within the synod. Previously, Good Shepherd and Mt Zion joined with pastors Eric Krushel, Marlys Moen, and Nathan Fong in the first intake. Gloria Dei joined with pastors Jennifer Marlor and Lori-Anne Boutin-Crawford in the third intake. We look forward to how the vision for missional renewal will continue to inspire churches and leaders.

### **MANY THANKS**

Our conference benefits greatly from the geographical proximity to the synod office and the ease of connecting with Bishop Greg. This past term was very busy in the GVC, especially while Bishop Greg was on sabbatical, and there were a variety of churches in transition or in crisis. I am thankful for the wisdom and help of Cliff Reinhardt, Secretary of the BC Synod, who significantly aided the conference leadership. It has been an honor to be paired again with Nathan Fong, sharing in the work as the GVC Deans, and with Jennifer Marlor, who served as the GVC secretary helping with executive decisions. It has been a great pleasure and honor to connect with and to grow with the churches and pastors in GVC, and I am thankful for the opportunity to be entrusted with this past term of leadership.

Respectfully submitted,  
GVC Dean, Lori-Anne Boutin-Crawford

## Report of the Dean Lower Fraser Valley Conference

**Christ the King in Surrey** is patiently awaiting the possession day of their new building. The congregation is eager to connect with their new high-density neighbourhood and is working with the bishop regarding the call of a half-time pastor in addition to Pr Gordon Hoeflicker.

**Christ Lutheran Church in Chilliwack** is also in a time of transition. Some programs, like the German language women's group, have ended. While some programs have found new expression, the congregation continues to age and to have a budget deficit. In the midst of this the congregations seeks to discern God's future. At a special congregational meeting the proposal to reduce the pastor's position to 3/4 time failed to receive the required 2/3 of the vote. Despite the deficit, the congregation has partnered with five local United Church congregations to sponsor two refugee families. In this context the congregation has hosted an interfaith learning event on March 13. CLC is served by Pr Dean Andersen.

**King of Life in Coquitlam** is in a time of stable transition. The congregation has permitted their pastor to serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Missional Renewal and has found creative ways of strengthening their ministry even while Pr Kathy Martin serves KoL half-time. The congregation is embracing (missional) experimentation and is finding new ways to connect with its community. Together with a group from Seattle the congregation is also involved in the sponsorship of a refugee family.

**Matsqui Lutheran** continues to contract with Pr Art McCaughan for pulpit supply.

**Mount Olive in Surrey** gives thanks for a good year of growth, renewal, and new life, nurtured by Word and Sacrament. Mount Olive remains connected to local ecumenical partners, is involved in the missional renewal process, and is engaged in theological and contextual learning. Mount Olive is served by Pr Peter Hanson.

**Peace Lutheran Church in Abbotsford** is about to welcome a refugee family, is seeking to implement the Faith Forming Faith catechumenate, is sharing Lenten services and studies with the Parish of St Matthew (ACC), and sees some financial challenges as rental income from a Korean congregation has ended. PLC is served by Pr Christoph Reiners

**St Paul's in Maple Ridge** is experimenting with different ways to serve its community (as expression of missional renewal) and will host a community plant swap on its parking lot. St Paul's is seeking to implement the Faith Forming Faith catechumenate process, is engaged in a stewardship program, and is raising funds for the replacement of the roof on the older part of their building. St Paul's is served by Pr Roland Ziprick.

**Shepherd of the Valley in Langley** is in stable transition. Pr Kristen Steele is now the sole pastor. This brings added responsibilities, a shift in the self-understanding of the parish, and a reduction of the congregational budget. The congregation has begun the process of missional renewal, remains supportive of its youth, and is looking to its future.

**Trinity Lutheran Church in Delta** is involved in many initiatives, is enthusiastic about ministry, and is willing to explore new ways of connecting with its neighbourhood. TLC has partnered with a number of community organizations to achieve goals ranging from summer kids camp to interfaith conversation. The congregation is involved in the missional renewal process and

seeks to implement the Faith Forming Faith catechumenate. Together with other Christian congregations in its neighbourhood the congregation is involved in the sponsorship of a refugee family. TLC is served by Pr Jennifer Wilson.

Respectfully submitted by Pr Christoph Reiners

## Report of the Dean Northwest Conference

Our conference has several things that are in common with other conferences and some things that are unique. Like other conferences our congregations include people who have a love of Jesus and an appreciation of the gospel. Members in our congregations love their community and try to support it as they are able both as individuals and as a congregation. Members of our congregations try to care for each other and occasionally have disagreements. Our congregations are experiencing tight finances, reduced attendance and core workers and leadership that are tired and facing burn-out. The unique things about our conference include two of our three congregations not having their own pastor and all of our congregations would be considered as remote or isolated which creates some challenging travel issues. Even though we are separated by vast distances our congregations share a special closeness with warm relationships between members of our different congregations. This is one of our joys as a conference. We especially enjoy coming together in our annual conventions. Having joint conventions with Peace Conference provides opportunity to connect with other congregations and members who share similar situations. I am pleased by the commitment of people to travel great distances to attend our joint conventions. We have two rostered ministers in our conference; a diaconal minister and a pastor.

### **St. Paul's Lutheran Church**

St. Paul's in Prince Rupert is the largest and healthiest of our congregations. Even with declining attendance they have been able to meet their budget and continue programs in the congregations and look to mission in the community. They plan to continue participating in Mission Renewal. They have been accredited as a Greening Congregation and are currently working with a community group to sponsor three refugee families. They hosted their eleventh intern this year. They continue to share their pastor with Lord of Life in Sandspit and Mt. Zion in Smithers. Future concerns for St. Paul include travel to Haida Gwaii and the retirement of their current pastor and calling a new pastor. A member of the congregation has donated a car to be stationed in Masset to help provide transportation on Haida Gwaii.

### **Mt. Zion Lutheran Church**

Mt. Zion in Smithers continues to hold weekly worship services led by lay people using sermons provided by BC Synod pastors. They receive a clergy led service with Holy Communion from me on alternating months and occasionally by a visiting clergy from Victoria. The president of their congregation died this year after a long struggle with cancer. The congregation is struggling with leadership and future direction. They remain committed to serving in the community supporting food bank and providing worship services at the senior's home. Their numbers are small but there is strong commitment to continue as a community of faith.

### **Lord of Life Church**

Lord of Life in Sandspit remains active in their community providing weekly meeting space for the local seniors' group. The congregation holds weekly lay led worship services except one Sunday on alternating months and when visiting clergy are present. The church apartment continues to provide space for clergy to come for rest and study or to enjoy a family holiday. There has been some conversation with a semi-retired pastor living on the north island about providing an occasional worship service. Lord of Life members see themselves continuing as a worshipping and serving congregation. They are thankful for B.C. Synod Missions support providing transportation for me to come to the islands.

## **Comments**

Some challenges shared within our conference include maintaining active congregations with reduced numbers, finding ways to grow in communities that are not growing, having opportunity to receive the sacraments and continuing to have hope. More and more the Conference is feeling like a multi-point parish. As Conference Dean I have developed relationships with members from all of our congregations. I am concerned about the future of our conference. I would like to do more to support all of our congregations. Some trips I have made between congregations have been a transportation challenge – to say the least. With cuts to BC Ferries this challenge will only increase. There are some signs of growth for our northern economy and population. We need to keep a church presence here to provide ministry to new and existing people. What we need from our Synod is continued financial support to help with transportations costs and sermons for lay led Sundays. Having an intern shared between congregations is a blessings but not a lasting solution. We look forward to other ways to provide pastoral care and support in our small congregations. Licenced lay to provide sacraments may be difficult with our limited number of capable leaders. We have some very dedicated people in our Conference who want to share the gospel. My prayer is that we will find ways to provide good pastoral support, leadership and training for them and our congregations.

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Jim Whaley, Dean of NWBC Conference

## Report of the Dean Peace River Conference

One of the big struggles of being in the north is the distance between congregations. From Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Prince George it's a minimum 2 hour drive to the next congregation all the way to 5 hours maximum. This means there are very few opportunities to be together face to face.

That being said people are willing to travel great distances when we have our annual conference convention. The last two years we've done a joint convention with the Northwest Conference, which goes all the way to Sandspit on Haida Gwaii. The first year we met in Prince George, which meant an 8 hour drive for some people. The second year we met in Prince Rupert, which meant a 12 hour drive and this year we will meet in Dawson Creek. We find encouragement together knowing that we all have to deal with a certain amount of isolation from our Lutheran brother's and sisters.

However once again our weakness is God's strength. Because of the isolation from other Lutheran congregations ministry in the Peace River Conference is very ecumenical. 3 out of the 5 congregations are shared ministries involving Presbyterian, United or Anglican partners and Grace Lutheran is currently exploring the potential for a shared ministry between them and a United Church congregation in Dawson Creek.

While we do have three shared ministries the honest truth is that these shared ministries struggle to stay connected to the BC Synod. Much depends on what denominational pastor is present at any given time. I heard from several pastors in shared ministries that they quickly have to decide which larger church bodies to be involved with because of the time commitment. This means that a congregation that is a "shared ministry" but doesn't have a Lutheran pastor, often drops off the radar unless there is a strong Lutheran presence in the membership, like there is in Chetwynd.

**Grace Lutheran Dawson Creek:** After a very difficult split where half the congregation left this congregation has expressed how blessed they feel to have moved beyond that experience and are looking at how to employ a pastor in the near future. Pastor's fly in from the lower mainland to lead worship and administer communion once every 2 months or so.

**Chetwynd Shared Ministry:** This shared ministry recently said goodbye to their Presbyterian minister Marlene Peck and is in the process of looking for a new pastor. Our main connection to this congregation is Carmen Little.

**Hope Lutheran Shared Ministry MacKenzie:** This shared ministry has been served by Anglican priest Henry Dunbar for over 20 years. Henry recently moved from MacKenzie to Prince George and continues to go up and do services and pastoral care on the weekends.

**St. Peter's Shared Ministry in Hudson's Hope:** Little connection with this congregation for some time.

**Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Prince George:** Served by Pastor Fleming Blishen. Recently sponsored a Syrian Refugee family in conjunction with members of the community and are in the process of helping the family integrate into the Prince George Community. Also involved in the Synod Renewal and Redevelopment Program.

Yours in Christ,

Dean Fleming Blishen +

## Peace River Conference Map



## Report of the Dean Southern Interior Conference

### Congregations:

Ascension, Nelson – Rev. Katrina Vigen  
Christ, Kelowna – Rev. Patricia Giannelia  
Deo, Salmon Arm – Rev. Erik Bjorgan  
Faith, Kelowna – Rev. Rick Schulz (a shared ministry parish with St. Aidan's Anglican)  
Hills of Peace, Kamloops – Rev. Jane Gingrich  
North Thompson Ecumenical Shared Ministry (Barriere & Clearwater) – Rev. Brian Krushel  
Our Redeemer, Penticton – Rev. Curtis Aguirre  
Peace, Vernon – Rev. David Hunter

### Specialized Ministries (Good Samaritan Society facilities):

Village by the Station, Penticton  
Mountainview Village, Kelowna  
Heron Grove, Vernon  
Hillside Village, Salmon Arm

### General Overview of the Conference

The eight parishes of Southern Interior Conference continue to be faithful in their proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament and in enacting the Gospel through service to their communities. These are changing and challenging times to be the church but our people have met those changes and challenges with grace and optimism. Our pastors (both active and retired) gather together regularly as a ministerial for mutual upbuilding and to discuss those matters which affect and influence our ministries. This is no small feat considering it takes eight to nine hours to drive from the northernmost point of our conference (Clearwater) to the southernmost point (Nelson)!

In this last biennium, there have been a number of pastoral and parish changes in our conference. In March of 2015, Pastor Rick Schulz began serving Faith Lutheran and St. Aidan's Anglican in Kelowna. This is a new parish alignment in which each congregation maintains its own denominational identity and affiliation but are served by the same pastor. There has also been some shared worship and fellowship events as well. In September of 2015, we welcomed a new congregation into our synod - Trinity Shared Ministry in Clearwater. This is an ecumenical shared ministry in which the Anglican, Lutheran and United Churches are co-operating. They have joined together in a parish alignment with the Church of St. Paul in Barriere which is also an three-way shared ministry.

With Pastor Schulz taking the call to Faith/St. Aidan's, that meant that Peace Lutheran in Vernon was vacant. Their search process resulted in a call being extended to Rev. David Hunter (Augustana, Saskatoon). Pastor Hunter accepted the call and began his ministry in Vernon in November, 2015. Ascension Lutheran in Nelson, which was also in the call process this past year, concluded their process when they called Rev. Katrina Vigen (ELCA). Pastor Vigen accepted the call and began her ministry in Nelson in October of 2015. This is Pastor Vigen's first call and so she is participating in the First Call Program which assists newly ordained pastors in the first two years of their first call. We are thrilled to have both Pastors Katrina and David in our conference and look forward to the many ways they enrich our life together! Pastor Kim Staus, who lives in Oliver and who was temporarily without call, this past year began serving St. Saviour's Anglican in Penticton.

The congregation in Nelson continues to build their new facility and are very hopeful that they will soon be able to move from their temporary quarters in a local school. Several of our pastors and congregations are engaged in the Missional Renewal Process with Rev. Dr. Alan Roxburgh that the BC Synod has been promoting. This has been well received by those pastors and churches and has already shown to be of great benefit to them.

Although the congregation of St. John's Lutheran in Oliver disbanded several years ago, there continues to be a number of former members of that congregation who continue to meet together on a fairly regular basis. The old St. John's building (which is under the trusteeship of the synod) has been renamed the Oliver Lutheran Centre and hosts a Lutheran communion service on the first Sunday of each month, presider over by Lutheran pastors living in the area, most of whom are retired.

Most of our congregations are assisting in sponsoring refugee families in their communities. Not only has this been good for the congregation in terms of actively engaging with the community at large, but it has also proven to be a valuable vehicle for inter-denominational and inter-faith co-operation. Pastor Jane Gingrich volunteers on the campus of Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops and is a vital and active part of their inter-faith chaplaincy.

Although there is no longer a nationally co-ordinated Evangelical Lutheran Women group, the women of the Southern Interior Conference continue to keep strong ties with one another by meeting every October and May for a one-day gathering.

Currently, all congregations in the Southern Interior Conference have a pastor and none are in the call process. There is a very good sense of collegiality among our pastors and congregations and despite all the changes and challenges, we are facing the future with great grace and hope.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Brian Krushel, Dean  
Southern Interior Conference

## Report of the Dean Vancouver Island Conference

The Vancouver Island Conference consists of seven congregations: 3 in Victoria, one each in Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Comox and Powell River (on mainland). Powell River is in the process of transferring to the Greater Vancouver Conference. Two congregations have full time pastors one of which has an intern, two have part-time pastors, one is vacant and in process of calling a pastor and two are served by supply pastors. One is a shared Anglican-Lutheran Ministry. Most are very active in their communities supporting local food banks, community kitchens, hosting a food cupboard and community garden, supporting men's shelters and free stores and having other groups use their space. One has no building but rents space in a community centre. All have regular worship services and many have Bible study groups. Most are also involved in ecumenical efforts many with their Anglican neighbours. We also have four pastors in specialized ministry areas including Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre, Canadian Forces, and Luther Court Society. One of these is transitioning from Canadian Forces back into civilian ministry. There are 16 retired clergy several of whom do supply preaching and interim work. There is one pastor on disability. We have people serving on Synod Council and the Synod committees as well as one person on National Church Council. Lay ministry is alive, well and flourishing. We have 7-10 youth attending CLAY and the Synod Confirmation Camp is assisted and served by people from Hope, Nanaimo.

Although we are all "greying" that is not stopping our ministry just changing the way we do it! The conference is a group of faithful people committed to serving God and their communities in whatever way their circumstances permit. This involves a great deal of creativity and fun! Whatever the future holds we know God will be with us guiding us into surprising and fruitful ministry.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Dennison  
Dean, V.I. Conference