



Relying on the Holy Spirit, Diaconal Ministries Canada exists to Inspire, Empower and Equip Deacons, as they animate congregations to join in God's transforming work in communities across Canada.

August 25, 2022

Fall 2022 Classis Report

Hello Partner in Ministry!

If you're like me, you find it fascinating when you hear something new and fresh about a familiar bible story or passage. In the book, "The Art of Neighbouring"⁽¹⁾, the authors look at the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 (see John 6:1-13). We can all agree this story is amazing - but perhaps it's not just merely about a large crowd of people being fed from a small boy's lunch box.

For starters, this story reminds us to see and acknowledge what God has given us and not always focus on what we don't have or what we still need. Here at Diaconal Ministries, we call that "asset-based" ministry, not needs-based. On top of this, the authors propose that the miracle of the fish and bread being multiplied happened **as the disciples participated** in the meal; *as* they moved forward in faith, trusting Jesus would provide enough for everyone there. If they had waited for that little boy's lunch to multiply *first before* they proceeded to hand it out, those 5,000 people may still be waiting to be fed!

Doesn't that make this miracle even more miraculous?!

Here at Diaconal Ministries, we have felt like those disciples. We have encountered some big challenges and thought we just don't have enough 'fill-in-the-blank' to do anything about it. Like the disciples, we have wondered, *'how are we going to do this impossible thing?!*' But, like many of you, we have prayed and moved forward in faith, knowing that God would provide *what* we needed *when* we needed it *as we participated* in His Kingdom work.

So here are some great things that God has been doing in us and through us over these past weeks and months:

What We're Celebrating...

- ***Churches engaging with their neighbours!*** Over this past winter and spring, seven (7) churches (located in BC, Sask., Ont., & Nova Scotia) explored how to become a community-focused church through an online cohort, led by Rachel Vroege (our Regional Ministry Developer [RMD] in Western Canada), Mark Vanderwees (our RMD in Eastern Canada), Ron Vanden Brink, and Jodi Koeman of World Renew US. While Covid has made these initiatives a bit more challenging, churches are

longing to get to know their neighbours and discover where God is already at work and how they can join Him. Read about it in The Banner [HERE](#). We're excited to see a few churches connecting with their neighbours and begin new ministry initiatives;

- **Our NewGround partners!** (formerly Operation Manna) You can view our list of partners [HERE](#) and watch their spring updates [HERE](#)! These ministries are changing lives in communities all across Canada and we are privileged to walk alongside them, offering grant money and coaching conversations. **NewGround Sunday was May 1st this year - did your church hold an offering?** If not, it's not too late. Visit our website for resources;
- **Churches pursuing reconciliation with their Indigenous neighbours!** In partnership with the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee and with the desire to work towards reconciliation, several Diaconal Ministries' staff and coaches were pleased to promote and participate in the [Hearts Exchanged](#) cohorts over the past year. New cohorts begin this fall!

"The role of a deacon is very wide in scope. There are lots of helps available through Diaconal Ministries' website and their Diaconal Coaches. I think deacons need to make more use of both of these!"

Eastern Ontario Deacon

What We're Looking Forward To...

- **Better coordinated disaster relief in Canada, with deacons leading the way!** In May, we, along with World Renew Canada, hired a Research Consultant who could provide information and insight into disaster/crisis response in Canada. Over the past several years, we've seen an increase in extreme weather across the country and we hope to equip and support deacons and churches in their timely responses. We look forward to seeing the final report in the coming months.
- **Our online stewardship course!** This brand new online course was designed to help churches learn and live out the Biblical principles of stewardship. We anticipate a few churches to pilot the course this fall so we can receive feedback before our full launch. Stay tuned for more info;
- **Deacons learning together!** Our recently revamped Deacon 101 Workshop (both online and in-person) and Developing Benevolence Guidelines Workshop will be finalized and ready to go for this fall.
- **More Diaconal Coaches added to our roster!** We hope to add 2-3 new Diaconal Coaches to our roster, particularly in parts of BC and Southwestern Ontario.
- **A new Strategic Plan for 2022-2023+!** Our staff and board will be coming together in October for meetings and a strategic planning session using information received from our National Deacon Survey sent out earlier this year.

Despite the ongoing pandemic and the many challenges that have come with it, Diaconal Ministries has had the privilege of seeing the hearts of deacons in action across the country this past year; and this is

what drives *our* work! (You can read their stories on our [e-Quip Diaconal Blog](#).) It is our sincere hope and desire that your church has been impacted by the work that we do to equip and encourage deacons in the areas of community engagement, justice & mercy, and stewardship.

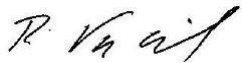
In order for us to continue to do this work and much more, **we rely heavily on a ministry share funding model, which is both *stewardly* and *cost-effective*.** It's important to note that Diaconal Ministry Shares (formerly "Dues") are not the same as Denominational or Classical Ministry Shares and are part of an agreement that Canadian Deacons made with each other in the 1960s and recommitted to in 2001 when Diaconal Ministries Canada was officially formed. (Read more on our website: <https://diaconalministries.com/how-were-funded/>)

For your information, our Board Executive for 2021-22 is:

- Chair – Peter VanHarmelen (Halifax, NS).....petervanharmelen@gmail.com
- Vice-Chair – Martin Slofstra (Toronto, ON).....martinslofstra9@gmail.com
- Secretary – Cindy Verbeek (Houston, BC).....cindy.verbeek@arocha.ca
- Treasurer – Rose Saller (Pontypool, ON).....rosesaller@gmail.com

If you have any questions or concerns or need assistance in any way, please reach out to us at dmc@crcna.org. May God bless each one of you in your ongoing ministry!

Respectfully submitted,



ron vanden brink

National Director, Diaconal Ministries Canada
rvandenbrink@crcna.org