NADC Consultant Classis Report: October 14&15, 2022

Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference (NADC): A Classis ministry of which all churches are members. The full board consists of a representative of each church. This representative is usually, though not always, a deacon. We exist to encourage and inspire congregations and communities to grow in living lives of stewardship, justice, mercy, and compassion. This is done by regularly meeting, collaborating, communicating and sharing of experience between members and ministry partners.

1. The Classis Indigenous art pieces, Creator’s Sacrifice, were in Fort McMurray for the Easter season and to the Christian School there. The prints were then loaned to our ecumenical friends at St. Joseph’s Catholic College on the University of Alberta campus. This happened in the summer for the lead up to the Lac St. Anne pilgrimage. Were they seen by the Pope on his stay in Edmonton, only rumors can say for certain… but I don’t think so. They have been requested by Avenue CRC for the 2023 Easter Season but can be loaned out anytime during the year. If your church has not had them, or you would like to host them again, please be in touch.
2. I was blessed to be gifted tickets to the Catholic Mass by ministry friends from the Anglican Church. They were looking for partners and friends to come as ecumenical observers so Jim Jossee, Neil DeKoning, Michelle Kool, Stewart Williams and myself went to represent the CRC. While I have heard a lot of reflection on the positives and negatives of the Pope’s trip to Alberta so far, I feel less inclined to speak on my own judgements of it as a settler guest to this land. I find this comment from an Indigenous activist resonated with me… “Let’s see what the Catholic Church chooses to do once the Pope gets back to the Vatican. Its actions or lack thereof will be the true test of its commitment to reconciliation.” - Pamela Palmater. The Pope’s visit has been good inspiration for us to continue our efforts at building positive relationships and doing the work of reconciliation.
3. Ministry interactions this spring have included in person gatherings again and it has been a huge blessing. I met with folks from Diaconal Ministries Canada, The Interfaith Housing Initiative, Indigenous ministry/Hearts Exchanged groups and we finally had our first in person NADC deacons meeting again in June! There was a really good energy of fellowship, excitement to see each other in person again and time for sharing stories of struggles and encouragement. We are excited to see what new things will be done or what will return for the fall.
4. At our regional deacon gathering we have discovered a new term called ‘The Covid Deacon.’ Not in a bad way, or one who has the virus, but a deacon who has started a new term during covid and has not known any other time than service during a pandemic. It was interesting for the new covid deacons to hear stories from seasoned deacons about what types of ministries used to happen, what things used to be done in the church but have not been part of their experience. We talked about the curiosity of whether or not some of those things will return and if the covid deacons will have to learn about them, or if brand new opportunities of service will become part of the role post pandemic. This will require more sharing and listening to how things are being shaped in each of our different contexts. If you have a story, of new ministry or ministry returning to former glory, we would love to hear about it.
5. Another interesting topic that came up from deacons sitting and sharing together was that of missionary support. A few diaconates share about the missionaries that they had supported were retiring and they wondered if they would just be assigned new families to support or if they could pick someone or what? That question led to a great reminder of the various ministry connections that can be made on our Classis and denominational levels. The NADC consultant is happy to help deacons and churches navigate those connections to other groups like the Edmonton Native Healing Centre, Cuba Connection, World Renew, Resonate and more!! And by the way, the answer to the above intro question was Resonate… For any global missionary support questions, our friends at Resonate are happy to help and introduce you to servants in missions who can use our support.
6. Day of Encouragement plans are forming with an ecumenical approach to reparations/reciprocity. We are working with The Micah Centre and local Indigenous elders to explore how themes of Biblical Jubilee and Indigenous ceremonies of Give Away have similarly important meaning and value. Stay tuned as details form but save the date in your calendar for November 5, 2022.
7. While we saw the end of terms of service for John Feddes, Wilma McLaughlin and Marg Hoogland, we are happy to welcome Margo DeMoor, Christiana Reitsma and Jeremy Stork to the NADC committee. It would still be great to have one or two more people join from rural or central Alberta so please contact [yournadc@gmail.com](mailto:yournadc@gmail.com) if you or someone you know is interested.