

NADC Consultant Classis Report: March 8&9, 2019

Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference (NADC): A Classis ministry of which all CAN 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 Day of Encouragement (DOE) on November 3, 2018, featured keynote speaker Dr. Bill McAlpine from Ambrose University. The theme was Sacred Spaces and many people expressed their appreciation for the number of unique ways of exploring sacred spaces. Dr. McAlpine was well received and many people followed him to a second session around the built environment of our churches. Other presenters explored the sacred spaces of CRC churches built over time around Canada, while others talked about the sacred spaces within us; dealing with emotion, heart and spirituality. Overall attendance was down from the previous few years and sadly that meant a couple of presenters were left with very small workshops. We will have to evaluate what this means for the structure of the DOE moving forward.
2. We gathered together in February as NADC board representatives, to listen to each other and learn. This is a time to network, share and update things happening in our diaconates. We were blessed to have presentations by Rick Abma, from Lacombe, AB about neighborhood ministry and social enterprise as well as Lucinda Klapwyk from Diaconal Ministries Canada, teaching about senior care and compassion ministry. We also had time for reporting on different ministries that our diaconates are involved with.
3. NADC Consultant. The fall is always a busy time for me as we hold the DOE and many other churches and ministries are active with events. I partnered with World Renew to host Jonathan Self for a couple of presentations about the International Relief Managers program, I partnered with the Climate Witness Project and Margo DeMoor to make a Climate Care presentation at the last Classis meeting and also helped promote events for deacons and churches around social justice and biblical advocacy. West End CRC hosted Cindy Stover from OSJ for Advocacy 101 training and The River CRC hosted an evening of learning and awareness about the opioid crisis. I participated, with members from St. Albert CRC, in the annual Sober Walk, to stand in solidarity with social agencies working to support people with addictions and to celebrate sobriety. Around Christmas, I was part of an online webinar looking at principles of Helping without Harming at Christmas (which DMC and World Renew followed up on with a January seminar on the similar topic). This too was hosted by The River CRC and was very well attended and received. Also around Christmas, more churches are starting to hold Blue Christmas or Longest Night of the Year services. These services are often focused on grief, lament and remembering lost loved ones. It is an important part of compassion and mercy ministries in our churches and I would encourage deacons to be active in working with their pastors and worship leaders for opportunities like these. I

was blessed to partner with my church, CentrepoinTE CRC and Trinity CRC to plan and hold one of these services in January as well.

4. NADC Communication. As I work to help deacons build bridges with our Classis, denomination and other ministry opportunities, I continue to make regular posts on the NADC tab of the Classis Website. It is a place where I am able to advertise upcoming events, tell stories of things that take place in the ministries of deacons and reflect on learning and reading I do as I connect with ministries within our denomination. As we supplement emails and newsletters with social media posts, we are trying to create consistent hubs of communication that can be easily followed, like our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/yournadc) and web tab (www.classisalbertanorth.ca/nadc). Be sure to go to the Classis website and subscribe to get monthly updates.

5. I want to take a moment to remember a friend who went to be with the Lord recently in January 2019. Many ministries and CRC circles were served and blessed by our brother in Christ, Melle Huizinga. We were grieved to hear of his accident and sudden death. He was a faithful servant and strong supporter of Indigenous ministries (among many other things) and I was blessed to be able to work along side him as Classis purchased and committed to circulating the Cree paintings called “The Creators Sacrifice.” Melle gave the formal apology on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church at the Edmonton Truth and Reconciliation Ceremony and was a leader in many areas of ministry; from the big social justice issues our world faces, all the way to the tender care of ministering to children on a Sunday morning. He will be missed and our condolences go out to Fellowship CRC, his friends and family.

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