



Sister Link

Regional Synod of Canada
Women's Newsletter



Synod Prayer Requests

1. The work of the Missional Task Force
2. Churches to get on board with the visioning process
3. Our partnership with URCSA in supporting HIV/AIDS initiatives in South Africa
4. God's direction in the search for leaders for the new BC church plant
5. Thanksgiving for the Regional Synod of Canada's annual general meeting, held in Woodstock in April

Call to Sign

The Regional Synod of Canada has just signed a petition in anticipation of this year's G8 and G20 Summits in Canada. The petition is a call to world leaders to take courageous and concrete actions to reduce poverty, protect the environment, and promote peace in our communities and globally. Signing this petition is not a statement that we agree with the beliefs of other groups that have signed, rather that we want global leaders to take action on issues that are important to us. Take the time to sign personally, or maybe even on behalf of your women's ministry group. Thanks to Louise MacRae for her commitment to issues of justice and for sharing this opportunity to show world leaders that we too, support justice.

Sign at <http://petition.faithchallengeg8.com/>



Love to Read?

Why not consider starting a book club for women at your local library this fall? It would be a great way to meet women in your community, get to know them in a non-threatening environment, and perhaps, even share your faith. You could try a book like Three Cups of Tea by G. Mortenson and D. Relin, or The Last Lecture by R. Pausch. Don't feel you need to force the discussion in a spiritual direction, allow the Holy Spirit to lead and give you the opportunity to listen and to speak.

Women's Ministry in the RCA

A New Day

Change has been in the air for women's ministry for the last year and a half. Last spring the position of women's ministry coordinator ran short of funds, and the staff person filling the position (Mary Clark) was released. The denominational leaders took the opportunity to re-envision what women's ministry could look like. With that in mind a fall consultation was designed where a cross-section of stake holders were invited to ask the following question:

Question: What are the most effective ways for the RCA to intentionally pursue a future in which women are equipped and empowered to fully exercise their gifts in the life, ministry, and mission of the church?

Three Canadian women participated in the fall consultation, where we engaged in a process of prayer and reflection, finally, coming to a strong consensus about where

God seemed to be leading women's ministry. This was that group's answer to the question:

"We believe that one of the most effective ways for the RCA to intentionally pursue a future in which women are equipped and empowered to fully exercise their gifts in the life, ministry, and mission of the church is to empower the Office for Women to gather women together in experiential learning communities. While some of these communities would be local, others would transcend geographical and cultural boundaries--and all would share a common goal of helping us to grow in grace. These communities would include elements of learning, service, and support, and would encourage RCA women on their journeys inward, outward, and toward community. Finally, we pray that by doing a new thing in a new way for a new generation, our grace-filled communities will begin, by God's grace, to transform the whole church."



Recently, one of the conference participants, Claudette Reid, from New Jersey was named as the new coordinator of women's ministry. Her primary responsibility will be to skillfully discern and be attuned to the diverse needs of women throughout the church, and to encourage and facilitate the development of multiple "experiential learning communities" of women in response to those needs.

Please pray for Claudette Reid, who will begin her new position on June 1, 2010, and for Tim Byrnes, who continues to serve as the administrative assistant in the Office of Women's Ministry.





That's nice... but what in the world is an Experiential Learning Community?

We are embarking on a new journey in women's ministry in the denomination. This is a new day, a new horizon, but oddly, for many of you, it may also have some familiarity about it. It seems as though this may be the most diverse understanding of women's ministry to this point. All women's ministry will have the opportunity to be enfolded into this "new" model. The denomination will not tell women what women's ministry must look like, rather it will encourage and support the development and continuation of gatherings of women that are focused on being increasingly transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. This model allows us to be incredibly creative in ministering to and with women of all ages, women in and outside the church. Allow the Holy Spirit to start speaking His dream for your women's ministry as we anticipate Claudette Reid's leadership of women's ministry for the denomination.

In case you are still at a loss for what experiential learning communities are... allow me to share with you a new example of what this looks like for one small group of women. Christa Plum, formerly a member of Drayton Reformed Church, writes the following article, a beautiful and exciting example of one experiential learning community that meets for one-day retreats. Thanks Christa, for your contribution.

A Time of Refreshment

A dear friend once wrote me the following: "Sometimes people, or rather the church in general, fails to realize that the leaders are often the ones most neglected; the ones who give the most encouragement rarely receive it in return... Leadership, I believe, is the hardest gift that Jesus can give a person, but He knows that you are capable of it – that you will not fail Him in helping others. [As a leader,] you have to lead others through the dark – sometimes wishing that you could have someone else light the lamp for you. But, if you take off the shade, you'll realize that it's been lit for you on the cross." These words have struck me continually throughout my last ten years, and I often reread the letter my friend wrote me to receive encouragement when I feel I have nothing left to give.

Beginning to meet together with three other women back in the fall for a mini-retreat was a reminder that I was not alone. Many other women serving in church leadership are in need of encouragement and a time to be spurred on in their faith...to run the race with perseverance. During our retreats, we have been able to share from the depths of hearts with no fear of judgment, share prayer requests and pray for strength and encouragement, shed tears over hurts, worship the Lord together, and celebrate and enjoy fellowship together through walks, coffee, movies and more. Though we come from different cities and different lifestyles, and though much time may pass before we see each other again, we find strength and encouragement from one another through the fellowship of Jesus Christ. I believe we have each realized our need, as women, serving in leadership or not, for these moments of grace together...these times of refreshment to press on towards the goal for which God has called us heavenward and remembering that when we want to give up, Christ has been the lighter of our lamps and we are surrounded by others to cheer us on.

The Cookie Lady's Chocolate Chip Cookie Recipe

1 cup original Becel margarine
1 cup packed light brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
2 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 cup milk chocolate chips
1 cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 cup white chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 375'
Cream together the margarine and the sugars until creamy
Add the eggs and vanilla and beat until light and fluffy.
Add the dry ingredients all at once, and the chocolate chips.
Beat until well mixed. (I use a stand mixer for these)
Drop by teaspoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet.
Bake for 9 1/2 minutes, until just lightly browning around the edges. Remove from oven and let cool for a couple of minutes, then remove them from the pan and place them on a rack to cool completely.



The Cookie Lady A.K.A. Beth Germs

“The cookie lady!

That's how dozens of John McGregor Secondary School students affectionately refer to Beth Germs.

And for good reason--she bakes and distributes dozens of cookies every Thursday morning to students in a church parking lot across from the school. Germs, a 40-year member of First Reformed Church on Lacroix Street (Chatham, ON), said she came up with the idea last November.

A large number of students patiently gathered in the parking lot yesterday waiting to spot Germs' car. When they spotted the vehicle, they ran toward it and quickly grabbed the freshly-baked cookies.” (Quote from an article written for The Chatham Daily News and QMI Agency written by Bob Boughner, the complete article can be found at www.rca.org)

From the “Cookie Lady” a.k.a. Beth Germs,

I just wanted to comment, from my perspective, on the newspaper article and to state my personal feelings on the subject.

First of all, it has very little to do with the community and everything to do with God. I sincerely believe that this whole thing is His idea! Pastor Pete and I talked about it last fall, and I thought, “No, I don't think I want to do that!” but the idea kept rolling around in my mind – constantly. The only thing I could do was to get out the ingredients and bake! The first time I delivered cookies to the parking lot, I was, I confess, a bit intimidated, but the kids were friendly and appreciative and it felt great! So, every Thursday, without fail, they get fresh cookies!

There have been a couple incidents however, and the police were called. A girl that apparently no one knew, started a fight, punched one of my girls in the mouth and another girl, who is seven months pregnant, in the stomach. They rang the doorbell at the church, knowing that I would come to the door to help – amazing! I really feel that we have a relationship now. They are my kids!

We had a barbeque of hot dogs and hamburgers pop and brownies today – there were at least 25 kids present! We hope to do this once more before school is out.

God is so good! These kids accept me and, I believe, even trust me. What a wonderful opportunity for sharing the love of Christ. **Thanks Beth, for being another example of a sister who is involved in Kingdom-building!**



Meet your Regional Synod of Canada...

Women's Ministry Advisory Team Members



My name is Beth van Hoeve. I am 23 and in my final year of university at Wilfrid Laurier in Waterloo, Ontario studying Business with a minor in Spanish. I am from Waterdown, Ontario where I grew up with my three younger siblings. My dream for women's ministry in Canada would be to have women of all ages benefit from having a mentor, someone they can talk to about God, ask hard questions with, celebrate and have a good time with, and receive guidance, support and wisdom from.

My name is Helen Konetzka and I live at Nanoose Bay with my husband Herb on beautiful Vancouver Island, B.C. I serve as an Elder and Clerk of Consistory for Woodgrove Christian Community Church. I am also an Assistant Choir Director, a member of the Pastor's Bible Study classes, prayer group, RCW, and the prayer chain. I am an Elder Delegate to B.C. Classis and a member of the Overtures and Judicial Business Committee for the Regional Synod of Canada. My dreams for women's ministry in Canada include: greater connection between current women's groups, increased resourcing and opportunities for mission, and to see the reality of new experiential leaning communities.



My name is Grace Bruines and I am a member of Emmanuel Reformed Church in Woodstock Ontario. I'm a Registered Nurse. I have worked both full and part time at our local hospital for over 37 years. I hope to retire soon and look forward to spending more time with my family. I am also exploring new and different ways of serving my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I am married to Henry. We have a daughter and a son. We also are blessed with three wonderful grandsons. I have been involved in women's ministry at our church through Bible study, Ladies group, delivering meals on wheels etc. since our children were young. I have been a member of Reformed Church Women's Ministries Design Team for Classis Ontario since 2003. This group helps organize spring and fall conferences for the women of our classis. I would like to see every woman and girl in our churches engaged in ministry in some capacity. It could be attending or leading Gems girls clubs to leading or participating in a Bible study to serving in a soup kitchen or going on mission trips. Women's ministry is not about the guild any more; rather, we are to serve Christ, however He calls us.



The Women's Ministry Advisory Team members are cheerleaders for women's ministry in the Regional Synod of Canada, who are actively seeking to more fully include women in the vision and mission of the regional synod. They meet 4 times each year online via Skype. The team notifies the Women's Ministry Coordinator of needs within the classis and shares stories of creative, local women's ministries, and through this, they give direction to the Regional Coordinator. The team looks for potential leaders in their regions, and creates innovative ways of connecting women to the lost and broken world that is loved by God. If you would like more information about this team please email me at clabbe@reformed-church.com To contact the team directly, email rsc.wmat@gmail.com



Blessing Boxes

A hearty “thank you” to all of you who have contributed to the Blessing Box fund. Churches, women’s groups, and individuals alike have shared from their blessings. Through your generosity, the RSC Women’s Ministry Coordinator position is funded. (The yearly requirement for this position is \$5000). May you be blessed richly!

Donations can be made to the blessing box fund by sending a cheque to the Regional Synod of Canada with “blessing box” marked in the memo line.

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Sister Link is an e-newsletter from the Coordinator of Women’s Ministry for the Regional Synod of Canada.

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ALSO, don’t forget to share this with your sisters in your church... they may not yet receive this newsletter and some of them do not have email. Consider printing a copy and posting it on a bulletin board. Please help to link all the sisters in our Regional Synod of Canada.