

Winter 2026 Classis Report



DIACONAL
MINISTRIES
CANADA

Equipping Deacons - Transforming Communities

Happy New Year Deacons & Churches!

As this new year lays before us, we pause with deep gratitude to thank each one of you for the ways you have faithfully supported Diaconal Ministries Canada over the past year. Your generosity, prayers, and encouragement have been a steady sign of God's presence at work through His people.

Across Canada, we have been helping deacons and churches learn to see their communities through a lens of **abundance**—recognizing the gifts, strengths, and God-given assets already present in their neighbourhoods.



DMC Staff visited various ministries in Classis ONSW this past July

As part of our work, we have often returned to the story of Elisha and the widow in 2 Kings 4—a story that beautifully mirrors the heart of asset-based ministry. When the widow faced a desperate situation, Elisha did not begin with what she lacked. Instead, he asked a simple, profound question: ***"What do you have in your house?"***

Her answer—“*a little oil*”—seemed small. But God used that small offering, combined with the participation of her neighbours, to fill every jar until they overflowed. What she already had, given in faith, became the seed of abundance and renewal.

Through Flourishing Together Cohorts, Helping Without Harming workshops, our NewGround program, and ongoing coaching and support, deacons are discovering:

- *every person has something to offer;*
- *hopeful and helpful ministry begins with dignity, not deficiency; and*
- *God multiplies even the smallest gifts when communities come together in hope*

Your faithful partnership has empowered deacons and churches like Living Hope in Abbotsford, BC, to lead with courage, compassion, and creativity. You have helped churches move beyond **short-term charity** to **long-term, relationship-centered** ministry. And you



have made room for more stories like the widow's—stories where "a little oil" becomes more than enough in God's hands.

In this report, we've highlighted some important developments and other work being done *with* and *for* deacons and churches in Canada!

Moving Forward in Faith Conference Returned!

Resonate Global Mission & Diaconal Ministries partnered up once again to hold this conference in Oakville, ON this past November.

Years ago, a speaker posed a simple question: *How do you grow as a leader?* The answer was simple but profound: learn from others, be where leadership is taught, and actually lead. The Moving Forward in Faith (MFIF) conference was created to help leaders grow.

Spending time hearing inspiring teaching while connecting with leaders from churches and organizations across Canada is a gift. This year's keynote speaker, Danielle Strickland, challenged us with powerful insights from Acts, contrasting God's life-giving power through the Holy Spirit with the world's pursuit of power for self. Many participants were so inspired they picked up her books before the conference even ended.

Workshops offered space to deepen existing passions or discern new callings. Diaconal Ministries led sessions on benevolence, what it means to be a deacon, and practicing asset-based community engagement. We also invited some of our partner agencies for workshops on creation care, refugee ministry, and homelessness.

Weeks later, we're still hearing stories of new connections and fresh vision. One deacon shared how a workshop and a sermon the very next day affirmed God's call to serve with their neighbourhood differently. Moments like these remind us why gathering, learning, and leading together matters.



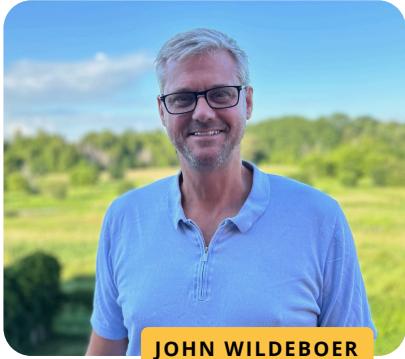
Living Hope CRC in Abbotsford has been part of our Community Flourishing process twice. The church helps run a breakfast program in a local public school. Participating in the cohort helped the church identify ways to build on the relationships with the families who attend as well as the school's staff and admin team. "[Living Hope's] involvement has helped transform our school into a place where families feel supported and valued, not just academically but socially and emotionally," Vice Principal Victoria Fehr shared.

This is the kind of transformation your support has helped make possible this year.

Their Community Flourishing team is now exploring ways to steward their church property to create community connections, conducting listening conversations with 3 local agencies to see where the church can partner and develop a deeper relationship with the agency.

[READ MORE HERE](#)





JOHN WILDEBOER



PERRY STELTER



LUCIA LAM

New Faces at Diaconal Ministries

We were pleased to welcome **Pastor John Wildeboer** as our new National Director on September 15, 2025. John was the senior pastor of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, ON, since 2012. His wife Grace is a social worker at a local Catholic high school. Married for 31 years, they have three children—Jason (married to Maya, parents of Freelton), Charis, and Michael. John has long been passionate about equipping churches to serve their communities. He has seen how loving one's neighbours transforms both church members and those they serve. Convinced of God's leading, John is eager to join the team. "I believe God is shaping an exciting vision for the future of Diaconal Ministries. Ultimately, I believe He has prepared me for this moment as I step into the role of National Director." Read more about John in this [Banner article now](#): ["Ontario Pastor is New National Director of DMC"](#).



Ms. Lucia Lam joined our team of Diaconal Coaches and is helping various churches in Classis BCNW & BCSE, primarily the ones in Greater Vancouver and Vancouver Island. You can read about some of the important work she has already done in a recent blog post: ["From Translation to Transformation"](#). Doors are already opening in Chinese congregations that we rarely engaged with previously!



Dr. Parry Stelter is our newest Diaconal Coach in Classis AB North! Parry lives on Treaty Six Territory, a traditional gathering place for many Indigenous peoples, and resides in Edmonton, AB. He has been married to his wife Angeline for 25 years, and together they have four daughters and four sons; two of their daughters are now in heaven. Originally from Alexander First Nation, Parry is part of the Sixties Scoop generation, with family members who attended residential schools. After being raised in foster care in a Christian home, he later reconnected with his biological family. Despite early challenges, Parry completed a Bachelor's degree in Human Justice, a Master of Divinity, and a Doctorate in Contextual Leadership. Parry brings extensive experience in ministry, human services, and reconciliation work. He regularly leads workshops related to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has written books and articles, and serves as an exegetical Bible teacher and pulpit supply pastor. Parry sees his new role as diaconal coach as a privilege and honour. He looks forward to getting known as many people as possible and building into peoples lives as he knows they will also build into his life. He believes that Jesus Christ does His greatest work with the church as stated in Ephesians 3:14-21.





NewGround (formerly Operation Manna) has been empowering deacons and churches to step outside their four walls and join God in what He is doing in their local community for over 50 years.

NewGround Highlight: WINGS Windsor

In 2025, Diaconal Ministries Canada, through **NewGround's Youth Justice Grant**, supported **W.I.N.G.S. (Windsor Intercultural Neighbourhood Girls)**, a grassroots initiative led by newcomer young women from Afghanistan and Syria in downtown Windsor. Emerging from community listening and relationship-building, WINGS was created to address the significant barriers newcomer young women face in accessing employment, belonging, and opportunity.

With Youth Justice funding, WINGS launched a **Holistic Employment Mentorship pilot**, providing paid internship experience, entrepreneurship training, and weekly mentorship through the WINGS Café, operated in partnership with the Downtown Windsor Community Collaborative (DWCC) and hosted at the Good Hood Community Kitchen. The initiative emphasized asset-based community development, dignity, and justice—centring the gifts and leadership of the young women themselves.

The pilot's impact quickly expanded beyond its original scope, generating strong community support and growing interest from other newcomer women. In response, DWCC and WINGS are now applying for a **NewGround Community Ministry Grant**, seeking a multi-year partnership with Diaconal Ministries to strengthen sustainability, deepen mentorship, and expand opportunities for newcomer young women. This work reflects NewGround's commitment to Spirit-led, justice-rooted community ministry that nurtures long-term flourishing.

Look for the WINGS story in our [2026 NewGround Campaign!](#)



WINGS CAFE

Diaconal Ministries is celebrating 25 years of ministry in Canada!

Diaconal Ministries Canada was formally constituted in May of 2001, after a group of leaders from various Canadian Diaconal Conferences came together and dreamed about merging to form an "umbrella" organization that would oversee the training of deacons right across Canada.

Stay tuned as we share details in the coming weeks of how we'll be celebrating this ministry milestone!



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