



2022  
-23

# ANNUAL REPORT

**Diaconal Ministries Canada**  
2022-23

[diaconalministries.com](https://diaconalministries.com)

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# Vision and Mission

## Vision

Transforming communities in Christ.

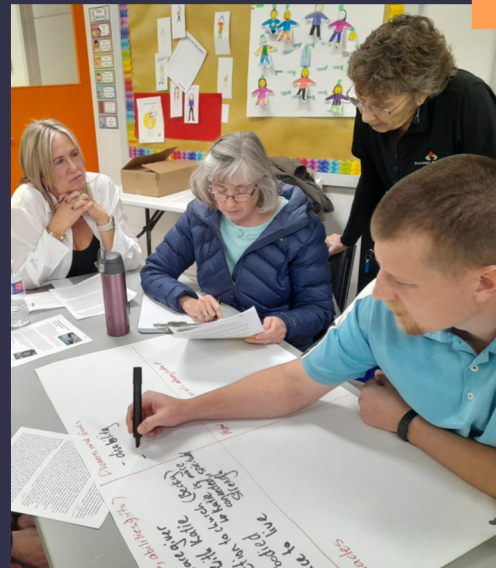
## Mission

Relying on the Holy Spirit, Diaconal Ministries Canada exists to inspire, empower, and equip deacons as they animate their churches to join in God's transforming work in communities across Canada.

## Key Focus Areas

- Engaging Communities
- Benevolence/Mercy Ministries
- Living Stewardly
- Service & Justice
- Leadership Development

***Diaconal Ministries Canada is a partner agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America that promotes diaconal work in Canada.***



# National Director's Message . . . .



ron  
vandenbrink

I was recently reading the story of Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4 and I noticed something new. When Jesus is awoken by his panic-stricken friends, he makes that great command: "Quiet! Be still!" In my initial readings, it appears he is talking to the wind. After all, Jesus is God, the Creator, so why shouldn't he be able to command the wind and tell it what to do. But this time, I began to wonder... what if he wasn't just talking to the wind? What if he was (also) talking to his fearful companions? And... what if - as is often the case - he's also talking to US?

I think many of us can agree we have plenty to be fearful of these days. We've just come out of a pandemic with the threat of it re-emerging, the war in Ukraine rages on, extreme weather events are happening more often and even closer to home, food insecurity is on the rise, and so much more.

This past year as staff, we have taken Jesus' command to "BE STILL" quite seriously as we have faced our own challenges, some overwhelming at times. We have spent more time in personal and group reflection, we've strived to develop a posture of curiosity (asking more questions before offering quick answers), and aimed to listen more and talk less.

The role of the deacon is quite daunting and it requires a broad range of skills as they engage in the ministry of mercy, justice, stewardship, and community. Strong leadership and spiritual discernment and competency are needed. They too can often become 'fearful' or uncertain of what to do.

And that's where Diaconal Ministries comes in; we work with deacons so they can be at their best. We remind them that they are not just the *doers* of the ministry God has called us to, but rather *leaders* of their congregation. Ministry must be done by all members of the congregation and deacons are the ones out front, providing the opportunities and communicating the vision for this work. This is what we help them do - through the power and leading of the Holy Spirit.

**We couldn't do this work without you - so THANK YOU!**





Created **BY**  
deacons  
**FOR** deacons

## Our Story

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Our roots go back to the 1950s when some of the first “diaconal conferences” were organized by deacons, for deacons, in various parts of the country. In those early years, World Renew (CRWRC at the time) worked very closely with deacons on both sides of the border and helped guide their work. In each region, these conferences were funded by a “ministry share” model, with a cost per professing member to help support their Conferences.

Over time, larger conferences were born across the country. The leaders of these conferences met together during the late 1980s and early 1990s to seek greater levels of cooperation. As a result, Team Canada was formed in 1998. Members continued dreaming about pooling their resources by forming an “umbrella” organization which would oversee the training of deacons right across Canada.

On May 25, 2001, Diaconal Ministries Canada was born! The same funding model which had served each regional conference so well for so many years was approved to be adopted by the national organization.

# From the Board



My name is Peter Van Harmelen and I have been on the Diaconal Ministries Canada Board since February 2020, currently serving as the board chair. My wife Rachel and I live in Wellington, Nova Scotia, and attend All Nations CRC in Halifax where I am also an elder. God reminds me daily that he is God and that I only need to be still and present and gratefully receive His goodness through ...

- our four children, Erin, Marissa, Annie and Andrew and our first grandchild, Ella Mae;
- the outdoors, where I do a lot of hiking and camping and nature photography;
- my fish-keeping hobby, started during the pandemic and grown to four tanks now;
- serving as board chair for Diaconal Ministries Canada, a highlight of the various volunteer commitments I have held in my life. I am humbled and blessed to work with such a committed group of staff and volunteers working together, *WITH* and *FOR* deacons!

God reminds Diaconal Ministries Canada daily ...

- that he is God and loves this organization and his church;
- that, in spite of an invasive pandemic, continuous staff turnover, and difficult denominational tensions, we are only to be still, trust in Him and continue with our work;
- that the real work of our new strategic plan is seeing God at work and knowing He will provide the strength and resources to implement it;
- that the role of the board is not only to ensure good governance and direction but also to bring the great work of Diaconal Ministries to the deacons in our churches so that they may have the resources to be a Christ-light in their communities.

Facilitating the work of the board through these noisy times has been my greatest joy as board chair!



Peter Van Harmelen



## What We Do

Deacons serve by leading and equipping the church to minister to its members and the world in a rich diversity of ministries — awakening compassion, demonstrating mercy, seeking justice, and collaborating with God's Spirit for the transformation of persons and communities.

Diaconal Ministries Canada partners with deacons, churches, and ministries to demonstrate God's love in the community in the following areas:

- Community Engagement
- Stewardship
- Mercy/Benevolence
- Service & Justice

Our dedicated staff also work with deacons to develop them as leaders in their congregation as they gain a deeper understanding of their mandate.

# Meet our Regional Staff...



**Mark Vanderwees, Eastern Canada**

[mvanderwees@crcna.org](mailto:mvanderwees@crcna.org)

I am currently in my third year with Diaconal Ministries. I am married to Nancy and we live in Brampton, ON. Our five adult children still occupy a lot of our time and thoughts. I love anything to do with the outdoors; my passion at the moment is fixing up a family cottage on Lake Superior with my siblings. I am also always up for a game of Scrabble!

My primary role is to help set the conditions where a diaconate (team of deacons) has the resources to flourish in the ways their diaconal mandate envisions. The most direct way is supporting our team of Diaconal Coaches to understand *their* role so they in turn can equip the deacons and mobilize their churches into love and action.

One of my accomplishments this past year was to design a workshop - "Helping without Harming in Church Benevolence" - based on a book of the same name. We were able to hold this **10 times** throughout the Eastern Canada region. The work-shop pushes the participants to think through what is poverty and what are the appropriate responses.

My biggest joy is running a Deacon 101 workshop and re-viewing the deacon's mandate with them - the rookies and the experienced ones. Seeing the 'lights' come on as they realize what all is involved in the calling to be a deacon. I can personally attest to that, it took this workshop for me to fully appreciate the critical role the diaconate has in the church and in God's Kingdom!



Helping without Harming  
Workshop at Covenant CRC,  
Winnipeg



*Our Regional Ministry Developers (RMDs) work closely with our team of Diaconal Coaches who are spread across the country (approx. 1 per classis).*

*When appropriate, our RMDs will also work with individual churches, particularly in the areas of community engagement and justice.*

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## Rachel Vroege, Western Canada

rvroege@crcna.org



I have been with Diaconal Ministries for 10 years now! I have been married to my husband, Russ, for 19 years and we have 4 children. Some of my hobbies include road cycling and hiking the beautiful mountains around Chilliwack where we live.

I see my primary job as equipping and providing training opportunities for deacons as they explore their task of leading their congregation in God glorifying acts of service - both within their church and in their local community.



Rachel leading a presentation in Port Alberni

A highlight for me this past year was training new Coaches and watching them flourish in their job of connecting with local deacon teams and offering workshops and encouragement. I've also enjoyed coaching churches working through our Community Opportunity Scan (COS) resource. This process takes around 9-12 months and every COS is unique and exciting as a church makes connections and sees their community in new ways that lead to fresh ministry opportunities.

The greatest joy in working with deacons is seeing a team move from discouragement or uncertainty to excitement and renewed energy for the grace-filled opportunity we have to live out our faith in a ministry of both word and deed.

# Our Year at a Glance



*Four staff members  
attended the Canadian  
National Gathering in  
Ottawa, ON, from May  
25-28.*



64

Workshops & training  
events with deacons  
across Canada



*Attending Synod  
and hosting the  
annual Deacons  
Dinner on  
Monday, June 12.*



*Our Annual  
Diaconal  
Coaches  
Retreat was  
held January  
25-28.*



75+

Consultations &  
meetings with deacons,  
pastors & congregations



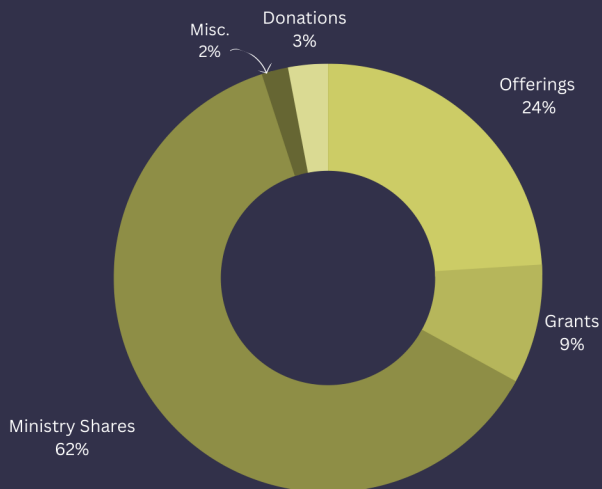
# Our Finances

## God has been faithful!

➤ Our primary funding comes from the annual Diaconal Ministry Shares that are invoiced to each Canadian CRC. This financial commitment that deacons made when Diaconal Ministries was constituted in 2001 helps us provide ongoing support and resources to deacons and churches, when and where needed. We are also grateful to the growing number of individual donors who support us!

## Revenue

**\$548,114**



## Expenses

**\$474,374**

Coaching & Programs	\$129,529	27%
Operations & Management	\$257,091	54%
Fundraising	\$15,151	3%
Grants & Support to Partners	\$72,604	15%

# Meet our NewGround Coordinator . . . .

Over the 6.5 years I've been with Diaconal Ministries, I have been a Diaconal Coach, the Stewardship Pilot Project Coordinator, and as of March 2021, the NewGround Program Coordinator. I live in Nova Scotia with my husband Gary & 2 dogs. We're becoming empty-nesters in September, as our youngest of 3 joins her twin brothers in heading off to university. In my free time, I like running in the forest, climbing trees, writing poetry, and making music with people from all over the world online. This fall, I'll be running in a 12-hour trail race, and my personal goal for the next year is to put together an album of some of my original songs and spoken poetry.

The greatest joy in my work is the people I get to meet, and that circle is ever-widening! In 2022, we added two new community partners. **NewGround is so much more than a grant program!** It's been a privilege helping these ministry leaders through one-on-one coaching and resourcing as they work to serve their communities. Meeting our partners and supporters in person for our Ministry Networking Day in May was a huge highlight for me, as I've been building relationships online with some of these folks for two years now! We also recently added a new youth rep to our NewGround Committee and I look forward to working with her and helping her learn about community ministry from a unique perspective.



**Karla Winham**  
kwinham@crcna.org

Involving the congregation in community ministry can be a challenge for deacons. One of the goals of NewGround is to get churches excited about the opportunities in their community, supporting them not only through prayers and financial support, but by becoming more fully engaged in their work. It's only when we get outside of our church walls and walk alongside the people we aim to serve that we can truly grow as Christ-followers.

*NewGround (formerly Operation Manna) helps churches love their community! Offering grants, as well as coaching and support to our partners, ensures they will continue to bless their cities for years to come!*

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## How it Works

The NewGround program includes Community Ministry Grants & Support (formerly called Operation Manna), Deacon Scholarships, Community Opportunity Scans, and a Youth Justice component.

## Our Current Partners

- **Cross Town Impact**, an after-school program for vulnerable youth in Brockville, ON. (Athens CRC, ON)
- **Crossroads for Prisoners Canada**, connecting people in prison with mentors from churches to develop Christ-centered relationships as they study God's Word together. (Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis, ON)
- **The Vault Youth Drop-In Centre**, offering drop-in days and other essential programming to help teens build healthy, resilient lives. (3 CRC's in Edmonton, AB)
- **Community Counselling Centre of London**, provides affordable counselling services by qualified psychotherapists (Good News CRC, London, ON)
- **Norfolk Pregnancy & Family Resource Centre**, a ministry that educates, empowers, and equips those experiencing challenges in pregnancy and/or parenting concerns through the non-judgmental, life-affirming, unconditional love of Jesus Christ. (Immanuel CRC, Simcoe, ON)





*There is a lot of support and information from Diaconal Ministries' staff and their website is very helpful!*

-Classis BCNW Deacon

*Our Regional Ministry Developer, Mark, has done an excellent job of keeping in touch with me and encouraging me as the Deacon Chair. I know that other members of our group have reached out to him and he's been very helpful with them as well.*

-Classis Toronto Deacon



# Meet Our Admin Team



**Chris Tollins**

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We recognize that deacons are key leaders needed to mobilize the ministries of the church and its members.

This is why Diaconal Ministries Canada is staffed by individuals who are committed to promoting the work of deacons within the church and the community.

Our support staff is here to help in any way they can!

# Contact Us

## Board of Directors

Jesse Edgington, Classis AB North  
Grace Miedema, Classis AB South/Sask  
Cindy Verbeek, Classis BCNW  
Liz Tolkamp, Classis BCSE  
Yvonne Schenk, Classis Lake Superior  
Jeff Robinson, Classis ONSW

Marcia Mantel, Classis Hamilton  
Mary Blydorp, Classis Huron  
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## Photos

Cover page: Helping Without Harming in Church Benevolence Workshop, Truro, NS. (April 22)  
pg. 3: Helping Without Harming in Church Benevolence Workshop, Barrie, ON (May 17)  
pg. 5: Deacons from The Journey, Newmarket (2016)  
pg. 6: Diaconal Ministries Board Meeting in Burlington, ON (Oct 27-29)  
pg. 14: *Top left*-Mark leading Deacon 101, Grace CRC, Scarborough, ON (Feb. 11), *Middle*-Helping Without Harming, Classis Niagara workshop (Feb. 4); *Right*-John Calvin CRC Deacons serving at monthly Community Dinner (June); *Bottom*-Ministry Networking Day in Burlington with NewGround Partners (May 25)