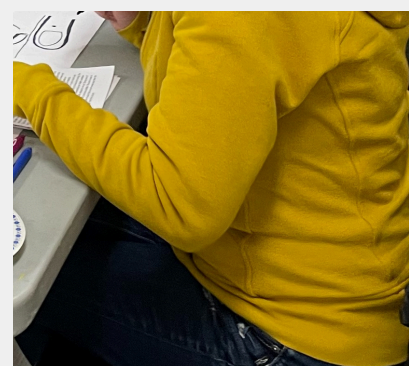
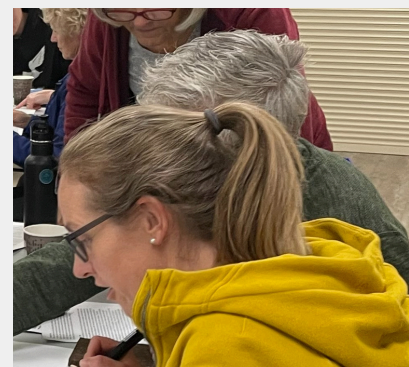
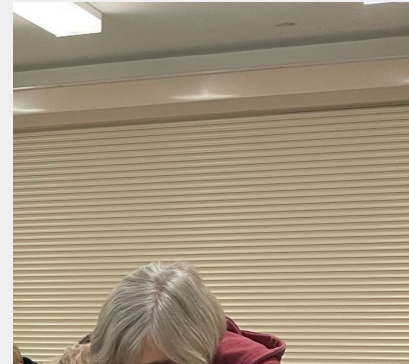


# 2023-24 Annual Report

*Resources & support  
to deacons and  
churches across  
Canada since 2001*





# What's Inside

## **National Director's Message | p. 1-2**

*This past year, we've seen synergy at its best!*

## **Our Story | p. 3**

*While we became an official organization in 2001, our roots go back to the 1950's!*

## **Our Work | p. 4-6**

*Our work is guided by the Charge to the Deacons, taken from the Form for the Ordination of Elders & Deacons (2016).*

## **Workshops - Impact Story | p. 7**

*Since benevolence is a large part of the deacon's work, both inside and outside of their church walls, we have developed helpful and up-to-date resources to equip them in this important work.*

## **Our Finances | p. 8**

*We rely heavily on Diaconal Ministry Shares to fund our work - these are separate and distinct from Denominational and Classical shares.*

## **NewGround | p. 9-10**

*NewGround connects churches with amazing ministries in their local community so that the people and places there can thrive.*

## **NewGround - Impact Stories | p. 11-12**

*Read about some of our partners' work in their local communities - thanks to the generosity of churches like yours!*

## **Our Team | p. 13**

*See who our dedicated staff, Diaconal Coaches, and Board members are!*



# A note from the National Director

## Synergy at its Best

### SYN·ER·GY

/ˈsɪnəʒi/

THE INTERACTION OR COOPERATION OF TWO OR MORE PEOPLE TO PRODUCE A COMBINED EFFECT GREATER THAN THE SUM OF THEIR SEPARATE EFFECTS.

***"I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things." – Mother Teresa***

Synergy at its best means we are better together. But is this always true? What happens when some are missing around the table? Or when being together means navigating challenges due to differences of opinion or personality conflicts? Then what happens to synergy? What if being together feels harder?

When we read the Bible, we are told repeatedly that being together (working together, being a team, etc.) creates positive synergy. There are countless Bible verses related to togetherness, unity, community, teamwork, etc. Already in Genesis 2, we are told that it was not good for man to be alone and that God decided to create a 'helper', someone with gifts and abilities that would complement Adam's. The friends of the paralyzed man in Luke 5 also knew they were synergistically better if they worked together, and their 'togetherness resulted in the healing of their friend - both physical and spiritual. I could list dozens more examples like this.

So why, then, do we sometimes resist this 'togetherness'? Here are some of my thoughts on this...

- **Togetherness is a decision:** Doing life "with" doesn't always come naturally to us. For potential and purpose to be synergistically realized, we must decide to help one another and work as a team. This makes togetherness/unity a choice we make every single day and the more we choose it, the more it becomes our new way of life. God promises to bless us as we work together, each person doing their part. Then we will experience God doing great things through us.
- **Togetherness takes commitment:** True commitment is when you stick by someone or something even when you can't foresee the personal benefit. Some partnerships





aren't 50/50. Sometimes you will bring more to the table, so to speak. The paralyzed man was completely dependent on his friends and family to survive. When we embrace the power of partnership, we will all reap its synergistic benefits, no matter who did what; sometimes our rewards come in unusual and supernatural ways.

- **Togetherness comes at a cost:** The paralyzed man's friends were a great team and great teams don't focus on the price they have paid (or are paying) to get them to where they need to go. Great teams are willing to keep on 'paying the price' until they do whatever it is they have set out to do. Sometimes the cost is felt more by one person over another; letting go of one's preferred ideas and strategies to come to a decision the whole group can get behind.
- **Togetherness is part of our witness to the world:** Synergistically working together - despite all odds and differences - for God's Kingdom is so unusual in our modern world that our teamwork will testify to God's love for a desperate world. In Luke 5:26 (NIV) we read: *"Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, 'We have seen remarkable things today.'"* Isn't that what it's all about!?

### ***So what does this have to do with deacons and our work at Diaconal Ministries Canada?***

Over the past year, we have seen deacons display synergistic togetherness - in their diaconate meetings, during workshops and Classis-wide trainings, in coaching sessions and consultations, and in their churches and local communities as they've carried out their tasks. *Did it come with challenges?* Yes. It wasn't always easy. But they chose to stay united. They remained committed, event if it came with a cost. And together, they displayed God's love to a broken and hurting world.

Since 2001, it has been our honour and privilege to walk alongside Canadian deacons in the Christian Reformed church and partner with them. We pledge to continue to help wherever, whenever, and however we can. Together let's strive to synergistically be the best Kingdom-builders, the best leaders, and the best deacons that we can and do great things in Jesus' name!

Thank you again for your ongoing support, both through prayers, diaconal ministry shares, and donations/offering. May God continue to bless you as you are a blessing to so many!

## **ron vanden brink**

National Director  
[rvandenbrink@crcna.org](mailto:rvandenbrink@crcna.org)





## Our Story

THE DEACONS IN CANADA HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF WORKING IN COLLABORATION WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE VARIOUS AGENCIES OF THE CRCNA.

Back in the 1950s, deacons of the Canadian Christian Reformed church began creating “Diaconal Conferences”. These conferences would meet to share experiences and resources, develop workshops and training events, and find ways to assist each other and their congregations. In these early years, World Renew (CRWRC at this time) worked very closely with diaconates on both sides of the border.

In each region, these Conferences were funded via a “Ministry Share” model, with a cost per professing member to help support their Conferences.

Over time, the number of Diaconal Conferences expanded and contracted as the various local organizations merged and/or folded. Leaders of these conferences continued to meet during the late 1980s and early 1990s as deacons maintained a consistent desire to seek even greater levels of cooperation. Then one day, in 1998, at a Classis Renewal Gathering in Chicago, Canadian folks representing the various Diaconal Conferences, along with representatives from Home Missions (now Resonate Global Mission) and CRWRC, met over lunch and began dreaming about pooling their experiences, resources, and training materials into a national organization that could oversee diaconal work across the nation!

It was an exciting time and, after a few more years of discussions the boards of the remaining conferences jointly approved the formation of Diaconal Ministries Canada in 2001.

A new Board was formally organized that year and consisted of one (1) representative from each of the twelve (12) classes of the Christian Reformed church in Canada. The Board approved a vision and mission statement and identified a number of strategic goals. Diaconal Ministries Canada soon hired a National Director, as well as other support staff, and began organizing training materials and timely regional events and creating a robust website.

At the same time, the [funding model](#) which had served each regional conference so well for so many years was approved to be adopted by the national organization.



# Our Work with Deacons

Our work is driven by the charge given to the Deacons when they are installed into office; also known as the [Deacon's Mandate](#).

We see four (4) distinct ministry areas that fall under the scope of the deacons. On top of this, we provide leadership development and help with the administrative tasks of the deacons.



## Our Field Staff

In order to equip and support deacons, we have two (2) Regional Ministry Developers - one in western Canada, one in eastern.

This regional staff works directly with deacons but their primary work is to train and empower our amazing team of Diaconal Coaches, approximately one per classis.

We offer relevant workshops and trainings where deacons walk away with practical tools and resources they can use to live out their calling, both in their church and in their local community.



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

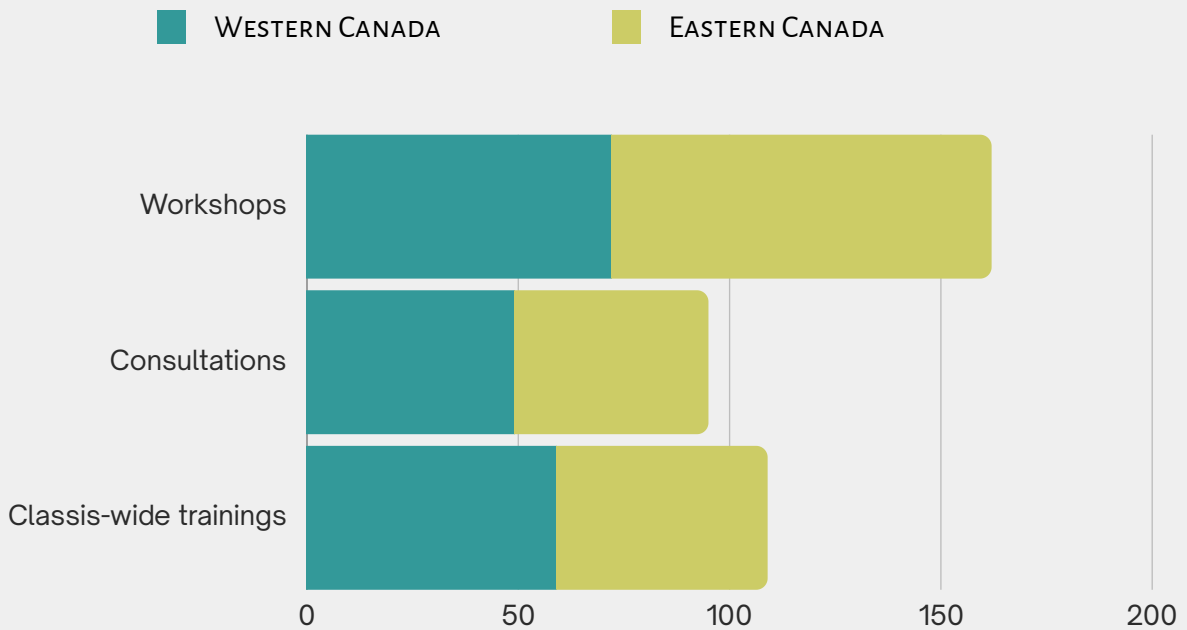
-RACHEL VROEGE, REGIONAL MINISTRY DEVELOPER, WESTERN CANADA



# Workshops & Trainings

Each year we aim to connect with every single CRC in Canada - through phone calls, emails, one-on-one consultations, workshops, Classis trainings and deacon lunches, at our annual Synod Deacon Dinner - and any other way we can!

## A quick summary...



### Classis-wide Events

*Gathering deacons together for support and sharing is a key way we equip them.*



*We do this through Deacon Chair Conversations (via Zoom), deacon lunches at Classis, our annual deacon dinner at Synod, mini 'Days of Encouragement', and other regional workshops.*



## Financial Life Coaching

**NEW!**

At times, deacons can feel like they are on a treadmill of providing short-term financial help. In response to this, we welcomed Ms. Anja Attema to our coaching team!

Anja spent over 30 years in the financial industry and has worked with hundreds of families and individuals to create the best version of their Financial Story. She emphasizes that a financial story not only considers income, expenses, debts, and spending habits, it also considers how finances significantly affect relationships, mental health, and one's outlook of the future.

If a deacon believes an individual is struggling financially and wonders if more can be done, [Financial Life Coaching](#) could be a valuable resource. Anja has spent this past year meeting with deacons, sharing stories of how financial coaching has impacted lives and offered a more sustainable long-term solution that benefits both the church AND those we aim to assist!



**NEW!**

## Justice: An Everyday Spiritual Journey for Deacons

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CRC CENTRE FOR PUBLIC DIALOGUE

We all know justice is important, but how do we make it a part of our everyday lives? And with so many injustices in the world, where can we and our churches start to respond?

In this deacon-specific workshop, "participants will not only be grounded in a biblical vision of what it means to do justice, but also become more aware of the assets they already have to address injustice when it impacts them and their neighbours," shares workshop facilitator Cindy Stover. Participants are equipped with an action plan to take home to help them identify what areas of justice to engage with in their personal lives, communities, and congregations.

This course is free and can be taken in-person or online at [learn.crcna.org](https://learn.crcna.org).

## Deacon 101 Workshop

**TRIED & TRUE!**

What does a deacon DO?? This [workshop](#) is designed for new deacons to learn about their role, yet experienced deacons can also share their insights and walk away refreshed. In it, participants take a closer look at the Charge to the Deacons (ie. the Deacons Mandate), talk about the ways the role of the deacon has changed and grown over the years, and look at practical examples of how this is worked out in their church's context.





# Workshops - Impact Story

THE CHARGE TO THE DEACONS STATES THAT “BENEVOLENCE IS A QUALITY OF OUR LIFE IN CHRIST AND NOT MERELY A MATTER OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.” BENEVOLENCE INVOLVES A LIFESTYLE OF LOVE, RESPECT, AND COMPASSION.

Many churches struggle when faced with requests for financial help. Too often they do not have a clear understanding of how to appropriately respond and react and so they resort to meeting the 'immediate' need(s) with little to no follow-up afterwards. For example, many of the diaconates we work with have a grocery voucher program that offers a *one-time, pre-determined amount* to give to anyone who calls the church with no consideration of the individual's income or how many reside in their household.

In some cases this could be the correct response, but in other situations this neglects to address the underlying root causes. The latter could contribute to greater dependency, where the person seeking help will bounce from church to church or agency to agency, receiving temporary aid. Ultimately, the church might be playing an enabling role rather than an empowering role.

Diaconal Ministries offers [two helpful workshops](#) to help deacons be better prepared to walk alongside individuals or households, bringing positive and long-lasting changes to their lives and ultimately contributing to their restoration as fellow image-bearers of God. The first is our **“Helping Without Harming in Church Benevolence”** (HWH in CB) workshop which helps deacons reframe what poverty is, choose the right type of response in a situation, look at a person's assets (not just their needs), build relationships, and incorporate accountability.

A great follow-up to this workshop is our **“Developing Benevolence Guidelines”** workshop. Having clearly defined benevolence guidelines will help churches and deacons focus their time and resources and be consistent.

**This past year, we ran these workshops with 50 different churches and helped approx. 15 churches write and/or review their benevolence policies!**



*This workshop was facilitated very well. There was a lot of generated discussion and scenarios which I felt to be very effective and thought-provoking. I left with a lot to think about which I am grateful for!*

-HWH IN CB WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT,  
THUNDER BAY, ON



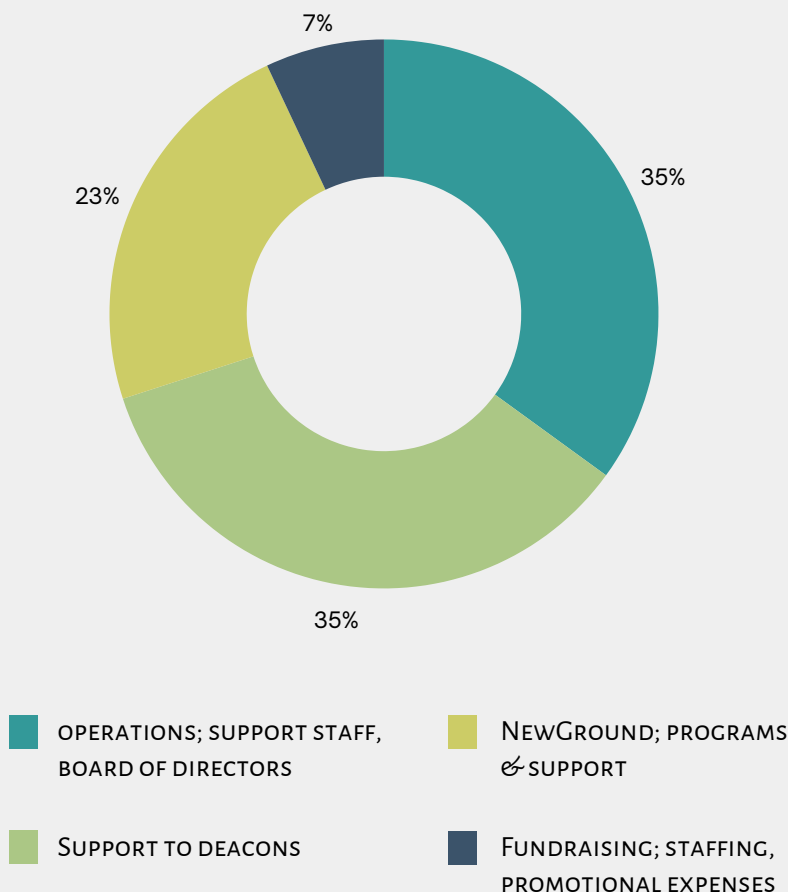


# Financial Highlights

## Breakdown of Revenue

Diaconal Ministry Shares ('Dues')	\$337,024	62%
Church Offerings (including NewGround)	\$134,023	24%
Donations (including NewGround)	\$39,272	7%
Grants	\$26,842	5%
Miscellaneous Income	\$10,278	2%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$547,439</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Total Expenses: \$557,817



## Notes

As with most organizations, increasing expenses continue to challenge us. With approval from our Board, we dipped into our cash reserves to operate our 2023-24 fiscal year, which ran a slight deficit. With careful planning and by increasing our 2024-25 [Diaconal Ministry Shares](#) (per member rate), we will continue to steward our finances.

*All of [our funding](#) comes from Canadian churches and individual donors and every dollar is spent in Canada.*

**We are grateful for the ongoing support!**



## NewGround

Over the past two years, we have seen more churches applying for a NewGround partnership. Grant requests have almost tripled since 2022. So what does that mean?

While our team has worked hard to promote NewGround and its benefits to churches and deacons, we think it's more than that. More and more churches have an increased desire to get outside of their four walls and engage with their local community. They are discovering the SYNERGY that comes when the people and organizations of a neighbourhood or region come to the table and ask, what can we do together to bless this community of ours?

Because of the ongoing [support of Canadian CRCs and other generous donors](#), we have been able to say yes to most applicants!

We couldn't do this ministry without you - so thank you!

## NewGround Partners in 2023-24

- Cross Town Impact - Brockville, ON
- Crossroads for Prisoners Canada - national
- Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited - Abbotsford, BC
- Pregnancy & Family Care of Quinte West - Trenton, ON
- Mission Montreal - Montreal, QB
- Community Counselling London - London, ON

### NewGround Numbers:

Fall 2023

Grants requested  
(3 returning partners;  
4 new):  
**\$89,000**

Grants approved:  
**\$65,000**

2022 Funding  
requested AND  
approved:  
**\$32,470**





# NewGround - more than just grants!

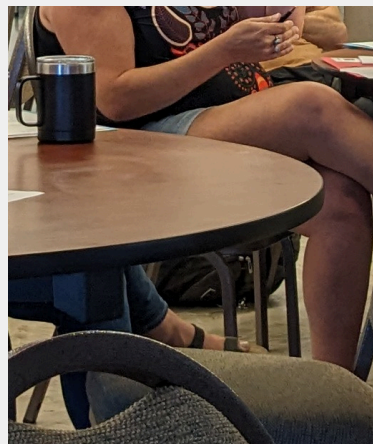
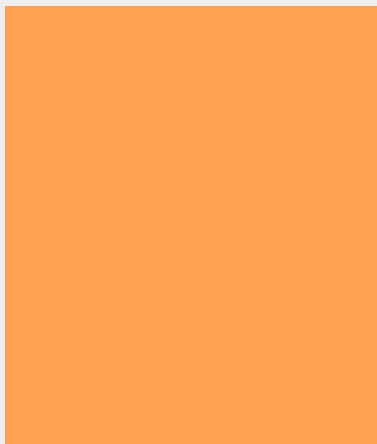
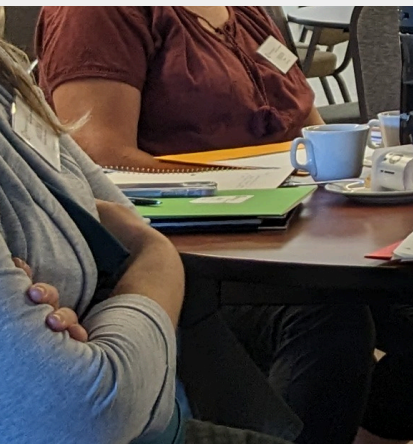
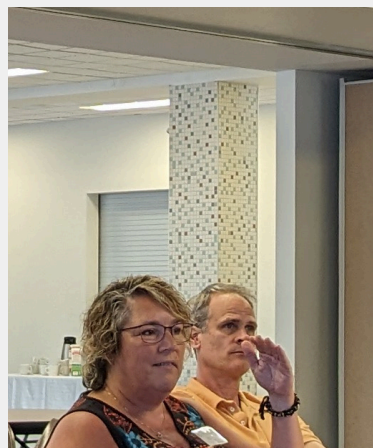
Coaching and resourcing is a HUGE part of a NewGround partnership. This is what makes this program stand out! Again, working together to address challenges, find solutions, try new things, and support one other through the hills and valleys of ministry is at the core of a NewGround partnership. Coaching help has included: board recruitment & development; promotions & fundraising (how to tell stories of impact); finding work/life balance; staff & volunteer evaluation; connecting with churches, and more!

Not only do partners get one-on-one coaching, but we hold a [Ministry Networking Day](#) each spring so past and present partners can connect with one another and share their expertise and best practices. One Christian counseling agency offered to provide a workshop about managing difficult conversations. We've had former partners be guest speakers to help newer organizations with fundraising and capital campaigns! Youth ministry leaders get the opportunity to eat lunch together and talk about the joys and challenges of their work.

It has been a beautiful thing to witness the SYNERGY with our NewGround staff and partners working together AND our partners supporting one another!

**21**

Coaching Zoom Calls (+ 5 interviews with new applicants!)



**26**

Past & Present Partners at the Annual Ministry Networking Day



# NewGround Stories of Impact



## Mission Montréal (Christian Direction)

Through Christian Direction, Mission Montréal desires to see God transform urban communities by the concerted actions of committed Christians by empowering the local churches and their members. Mission Montréal has been supported by Resonate Global Mission, Classis Eastern Canada, First CRC Montréal, and Diaconal Ministries Canada for several years.

The two churches they are currently working with are addressing the high levels of newcomers to Canada who are navigating intergenerational poverty and a lack of affordable housing and homelessness, respectively.

Most churches want to rush to create a new 'brick and mortar' ministry/program, without adequate listening and learning first. The project that NewGround is supporting will help these two local congregations in the east end of Montréal discern and design a long-term, concerted, and sustainable missional project based on incarnational community engagement principles.

Over this past year, their team was able to form and build a relationship with the Centre Lasallien, an educational centre that was founded in part by the clergy of ACMH church in Saint-Michel. This centre has served their neighbourhood for a long time, being a welcoming space for the community. Mission Montréal leadership are excited to see how this relationship will grow.



## Pregnancy & Family Care of Quinte West

The Pregnancy and Family Care centre exists to support women and families in the community who are facing planned or unplanned pregnancies. They strive to help women know their value and experience the joy of being connected to community so that they will ultimately thrive. The centre provides support, education, and resources through hope, connection, and compassionate care.

One day the centre's director went through a Tim Horton's drive thru wearing a shirt with their logo on it. The woman working the window saw the shirt and broke down in tears. A few years prior, she had found herself unexpectedly pregnant and did not know what to do or where to turn. She ended up at the centre and spoke with a staff member. Today, she is a doting mother to a beautiful baby girl and has healthy plans in place to be able to care for her daughter. THIS is who this ministry is for!



## NewGround Stories cont...



### Crossroads for Prisoners Canada

Crossroads connects people in prison with mentors from churches to develop Christ-centered relationships as they study God's Word together.

Director Harry Stam first got involved in prison ministry in 2009, thinking he'd just try it out for a year! When that ministry shut down in 2019, he re-launched Crossroads for Prisoners Canada in partnership with Crossroads Prison Ministry International. NewGround has been helping Harry get this ministry re-established across the country, providing opportunities to network and planning for sustainable organizational leadership.

In 2023, 52 mentors from churches across Canada communicated by mail with 114 active 'students' in prisons, helping them complete 1,500 Bible lessons! Through this ministry, dozens of men and women have accepted God's free gift of grace. Harry hopes that even more churches will accept the challenge of ministering to those in prison as Jesus taught us to do!



### Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited

The "Sumas Prairie Resiliency Project" is a partnership between Greater Vancouver Youth Unlimited, Samaritan's Purse, and New Life CRC in Abbotsford, BC. Building upon the relationships and connections made during the two years of flood relief work, in April 2024, GYU began supporting the youth of the area who are coping with trauma and other mental health concerns.

One after-school soccer coaching program was started at Semá:th Elementary. To their surprise, 48 eager students joined! The students kept showing up consistently, ready to engage and learn. As the program progressed, it became clear that they were doing something special. The program at Semá:th has not only brought joy and growth to its participants but had also set a standard of excellence that others are beginning to notice. This is a testament to the power of connection, the importance of community support, and the incredible impact we can make when we work together to meet the needs of our youth.



# Our Team



## Our Field & Support Staff

**Ron Vanden Brink**, National Director - [rvandenbrink@crcna.org](mailto:rvandenbrink@crcna.org)

**Rachel Vroege**, Regional Ministry Developer, West - [rvroege@crcna.org](mailto:rvroege@crcna.org)

**Mark Vanderwees**, Regional Ministry Developer, East - [mvanderwees@crcna.org](mailto:mvanderwees@crcna.org)

**Bea Vlieg**, Financial Coordinator - [bvlieg@crcna.org](mailto:bvlieg@crcna.org)

**Kim Zantingh**, Office Assistant - [kzantingh@crcna.org](mailto:kzantingh@crcna.org)

**Karla Winham**, NewGround Coordinator - [kwinham@crcna.org](mailto:kwinham@crcna.org) (until Nov. 1'24)

**Erin Knight**, Communications Coordinator - [eknight@crcna.org](mailto:eknight@crcna.org)



## Board of Directors 2024-25

Liz Tolkamp, *Classis BCSE*

Sharon Bandstra, *Classis BCNW*

TBA, *Classis AB North*

TBA, *Classis AB South/Sask*

Yvonne Schenk, *Classis Lake Superior*

Jeff Fernhout, *Classis Toronto*

TBA, *Classis Hamilton*

TBA, *Classis Niagara*

Jeff Robinson, *Classis ON SW*

Mary Blydorp, *Classis Huron*

Rose Saller, *Classis Quinte*

Peter Van Harmelen, *Classis Eastern Canada*, Chair



## Diaconal Coaches 2024-25

Gary Veeneman, *Classis BCSE*

Erika Repka, *Classis AB North*

Marg Hoogland, *Classis AB North*

Jean De Beer, *Classis AB South/Sask*

Teda Heerema, *Classis Lake Superior*

Terry Vanderhorst, *Classis Toronto*

John Klein-Geltink, *Classis ON SW*

Anita Plat-Kuiken, *Classis ON SW*

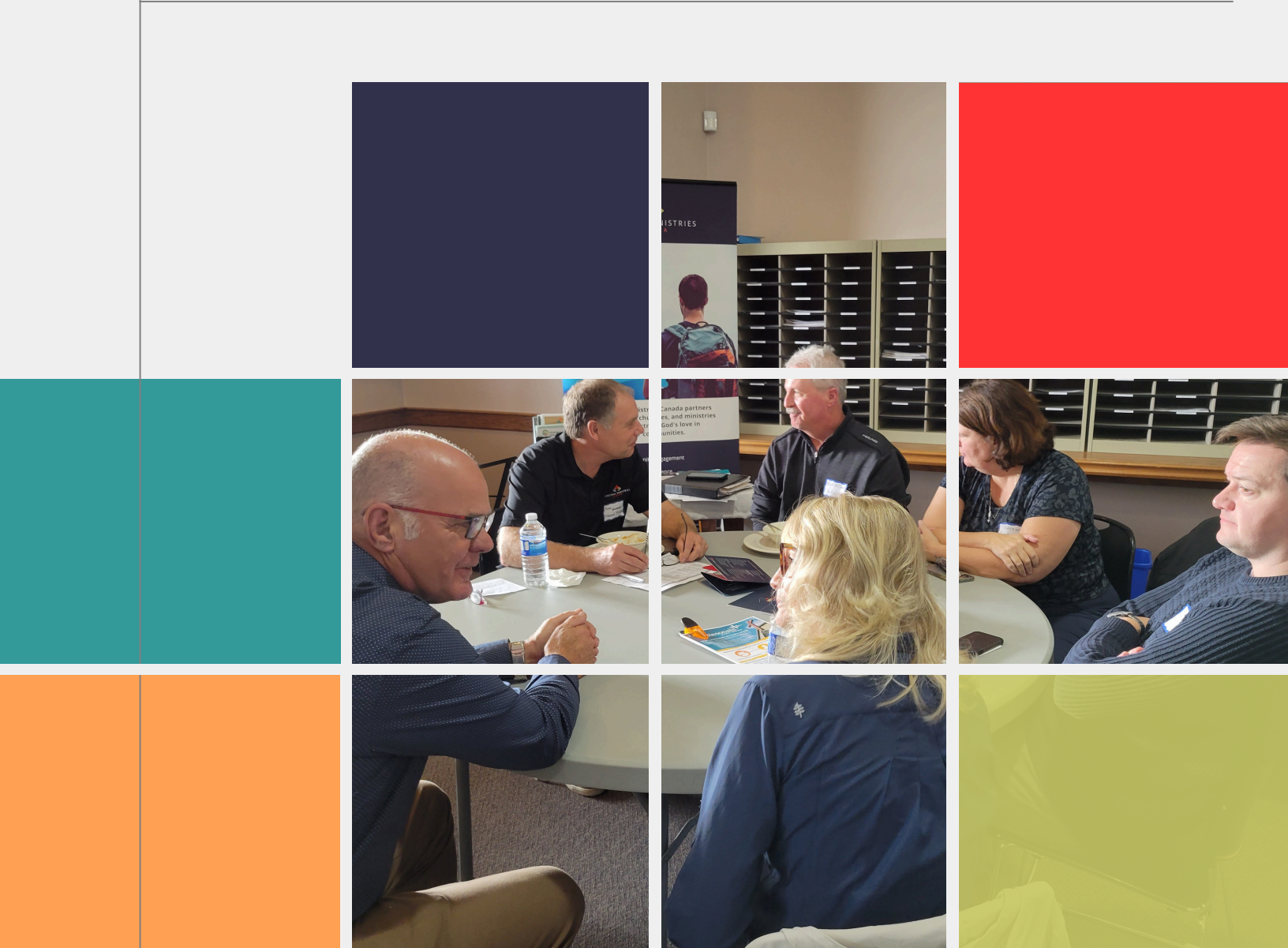
Fred Vandersterre, *Classis Huron*

Jane Vander Velden, *Classis Huron*

Erick Schuringa, *Classis Niagara*

Winston Visser, *Classis Eastern Canada (ON & QB)*





# Thank You

*Diaconal Ministries Canada works to inspire, equip, and train deacons so that they can animate their churches to faithfully serve in every corner of God's kingdom. We couldn't do any of this without your ongoing support!*



1-800-730-3490



3475 Mainway, Burlington, ON



[www.diaconalministries.com](http://www.diaconalministries.com)

## PHOTOS

- Cover - HWH in CB workshop, Barrie, Nov 22'23
- Pg. 3 - Annual Diaconal Coach Gathering, Jan 18-20'24
- Pg. 4 - Classis BCSE Leadership Conference, Sept 16'23
- Pg 5. - Classis Huron Spring Diaconal Conference, Apr 18'24
- Pg. 6 - Justice workshop led by Cindy Stover, SPARK! 2024
- Pg. 7 - Diakonia Circle, Classis AB North churches, Nov 7'23
- Pg. 10 - Ministry Networking Day, Indwell, Hamilton, ON, May 2024
- Pg. 11 - NewGround Partner - Mission Montréal, 2024
- Pg. 12 - NewGround Partner - Semá:th after-school soccer program, Greater Vancouver YU, Spring 2024
- Pg. 13 - DMC Board Meeting, October 2023
- Back - Classis Hamilton Deacon's lunch, Fall 2023