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Putting a Face to Ruling Eldership

Ruling elders from churches across the country have been sending photos to the Elders' Institute to be included in one of the dozen posters artist Carolyn Boyer has designed to celebrate Canadian eldership in service to Christ. The collages of photos are featured on a variety of backgrounds to express that elders are an active part of the Body of Christ serving in the local church, the community and the world. The poster backgrounds reflect the belief that God wants Christians and the church to engage in issues confronting the church as it seeks to be faithful in the 21st century. The poster to the right includes elders from three churches across Canada and represents 770 years of elder service. Elders from about 75 congregations have submitted their photos. It's not too late if you'd still like to participate in this project. For more information, visit the EI website: www.eldersinstitute.ca.



Carolyn Boyer serves as a ruling elder at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Barrie, Ont. Her formal art training includes courses in stained glass, figure studies, media and ceramics. She is also a teacher and freelance writer. Carolyn is

the author of the companion guide to *Living Faith – An Interactive Guide to Living Faith*. This study guide offers diverse learning activities to appeal to every learning preference, including visual, verbal, musical. *An Interactive Guide to Living Faith* is available

Tools for Tune-Ups

Seasoned elders and newly ordained alike – we all need occasional tune-ups so we don't slip into habits that impede effective ministry. The EI tool box offers quick pointers and refreshers on one-page documents that you can download, reproduce and distribute to your church committees for free. How to help your committees work as effective teams, formulate motions, reach consensus, debate a motion and many more one-page tools are available on the EI website: www.eldersinstitute.ca.

from the WMS Book Room. (To order, call: 1-800-619-7301.)

Carolyn was surprised to find that cutting the faces from the photos became a meditative experience:



I discovered a truth learned from an aboriginal friend: looking into another's eyes is like seeing into the soul. Handling so many souls, young and old, happy and sad, is a special honour. I marvel at the faces of elders who say yes to the call of giving time and energy. I perceive diverse personalities who promise to love the Lord, the church, each other, the unlovable – all while working to change the world. The scriptural image of the church as a body with many parts is a reality for me now. I am grateful for this understanding and for all these brothers and sisters in my family.

A Question From the Grassroots

Q: One of our ruling elders has to be out of town when an important session meeting is to take place. He would like to participate by speaker phone or even a video link. Is that OK, or is it against the rules?

A: Never had that question before! In madly checking the Book of Forms, I could not see any reference to permitting such a practice. On the other hand, I didn't see any reference not to allow such a practice.

Thinking about this, I can see no good reason why this would not be both possible and allowable. On the technology side, it would be best to have good equipment available. Sitting by a speaker phone for a three-hour meeting would be little different than

sitting in a room with other elders for a three-hour meeting – though, come to think about it, three hours is too long to retain good communication. Though such a separation in distance is not the most desirable arrangement, it is better to have someone on the other end of a phone or video camera than not to have the person available at all.

As we adapt to our times, we can learn from others, especially those who use this kind of technology on a regular basis. Why not go ahead and tell us about your experience.

This question was answered by L. E. (Ted) Siverns. If you have a question of interest to other elders, let us know and we may publish the answer in our next newsletter.



PAW (Pre-Assembly Workshops) 2009

**Chedoke Presbyterian Church
Hamilton · Ontario
Saturday · June 6 · 2009**

**Presbyterian Questions,
Presbyterian Answers**



Workshop leaders include Karen Horst, Pat Dutcher-Walls, Ken Kim, Susan Clarke, Lynda Pinnington, Joan Stamler and Roberta Clare.

The workshops are:

- > *Elders rule! How do we make decisions?*
- > *What skills do we need to read the Bible?*
- > *The giver or the receiver? Who's changed the most by our mission and development projects?*
- > *Lead on! How can we lead into the future together?*
- > *How do we judge a book by its cover?*
- > *How do we take care of body and soul?*

The lunchtime keynote address is:

- > *How can we honour Presbyterians of diverse cultures in our faith communities?*

CHEOL SOON PARK, MODERATOR OF THE 134TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY on developing skills for intercultural ministry.

For more information and to register, visit our website: www.eldersinstitute.ca.

EI LINK Convener Passes Away

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Betty Ho on August 10, 2008. Betty was ordained as a ruling elder in 2000. She served as the clerk of session of the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, taught Sunday school and sat on many committees of the Presbytery of Westminster through the years. However, the Elders' Institute knew Betty best for her support and commitment to the ministry of EI. Betty was looking forward to serving as the new convener of the EI Link. Wisdom from the grassroots is the motto for the EI Link whose primary responsibility is to counsel the Elders' Institute staff on effective ministry from their perspective of service at the local level. This would involve identifying the needs of ruling elders and following through with local action. We will miss Betty's gracious spirit and faithful presence.



Exploring the Lord's Prayer

“Pray this way!”—praying the Lord's Prayer with understanding.

Jesus said “Pray this way” and taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer. He also told them not to “heap up empty phrases” when praying.

Date Start: Monday, October 20, 2008

Date End: Friday, November 28, 2008

We repeat constantly the words of the prayer he taught but, if we do not understand its meaning, perhaps we too are heaping up empty phrases. In this course, we will use the words and phrases of this wonderful prayer as a doorway into a deeper understanding of prayer and basic Christian theology. The course, written and taught by Stephen Farris, is a combination of Bible study and practice in prayer.

For more information and registration, visit our website: www.eldersinstitute.ca.

Sessions Learn Together Through Online Learning

The popularity of team online learning is growing in Presbyterian circles. This fall, a group of 10 folks from St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Prince Albert, Sask., are studying together with the Elders' Institute online course **Reading the Hebrew Bible With New Eyes** taught by Patricia Dutcher-Walls. Also, a group from St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Peterborough, Ont., are exploring the call to eldership through **Serving as a Ruling Elder** taught by Leslie Walker. If your session would like to take this popular course together, phone us toll-free at 1-866-794-8888. It runs next from January 19 to February 27, 2009.



New courses for 2009 include **Living Faith: A Closer Look** written and taught by Stephen Hayes and **Pastoral Visiting**, with Jean Morris.

Living Faith: A Closer Look

Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief was originally received by our church in 1984 as “an acceptable statement of faith useful in worship and for study.” In 1998 it was made part of our subordinate standards. That is to say, it has now become an expression of the faith we profess as a church.

It has sold many copies and is widely used in worship, confirmation classes and study groups. Its enduring appeal continues to attract interest. The Presbyterian Church in Canada is unusual in this regard: aside from a few brief summaries, a surprising number of

churches, including The Church of Scotland, have *not* accepted new statements of faith.

All of this invites a closer look at this intriguing document. Stephen Hayes, convener of the committee that produced *Living Faith*, guides us through it in this delightful new online course.

Date Start: Monday, April 27, 2009

Date End: Friday, June 5, 2009

For more information and registration, visit our website: www.eldersinstitute.ca.

Elders' Corner

In our last newsletter, we asked how elders would respond to a hypothetical refugee situation. What happened next was not hypothetical! It really happened: an opportunity for churches in the Presbytery of Westminster to band together and show the love of Christ.

A refugee family arrived for worship at Central Presbyterian Church in Vancouver. They came from Zimbabwe via Johannesburg and Frankfurt. Their life had been good in Zimbabwe until the father refused to vote for President Mugabe's party and his life was endangered. In the three-plus years after fleeing the Mugabe regime in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, by swimming across a crocodile-infested river, the family stayed in a refugee camp in Johannesburg. They had been members of the Presbyterian Church

in Zimbabwe and South Africa. They left with only the clothes on their backs.

The Canadian church's response to the refugee family's dilemma can best be described in the words of the father in his letter to an elder back in his home congregation in Johannesburg:

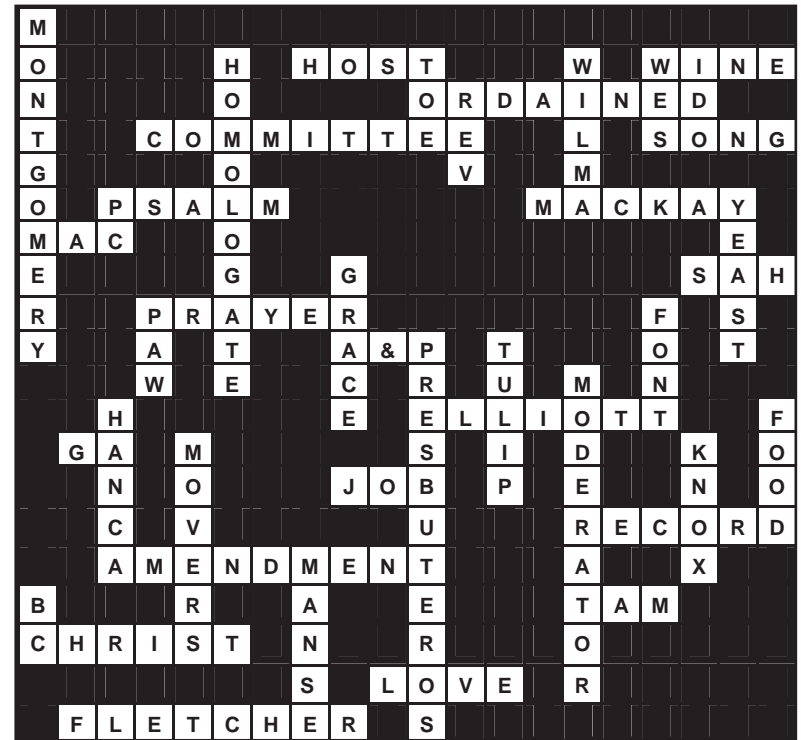
At Vancouver, the Central Presbyterian Church organized furniture for us from members of the congregation and other Presbyterian churches around Vancouver [including Coquitlam, Richmond, Langley and Haney]. There were so many donations of furniture that some of them had to be put on hold. The Presbyterian Church is a true family and, when we moved to our new place, there were some other members as well to receive us. It was so overwhelming that we nearly broke into tears.

Not only did churches donate furniture, an elder from Central Church helped the family find an apartment in Coquitlam – only a few blocks away

from Coquitlam Church, whose members took the family under their wings and provided further Christian family support.

Crossword Puzzle Answers

(to Presbyterian Puzzle in Spring – Summer 2008 Newsletter)



And the Winner Is...

Congratulations to Ann Friesen from Calvin Church, Abbotsford, B.C., who won a \$25 Elders' Institute gift certificate for being the first to submit her answers for the Presbyterian crossword puzzle.

On-the-Road Workshops: Roberta's Excellent Adventure

The Elders' Institute introduced a new program this summer for ruling elders in rural and remote areas as EI director Roberta Clare travelled in a camper van to Woodstock, Hanwell and Harvey, N.B. The program is designed to engage ruling elders and lay leaders in formal and informal learning settings through workshops, worship and conversations on topics that address spiritual leadership in today's church. The project introduced three new EI workshops on evangelism, finding and keeping volunteers, and fighting burnout. The Elders' Institute also designs workshops to address specific questions relevant to ministry in each area visited. EI welcomes all inquiries from both presbyteries and individual churches that would like to learn more about how to participate in an "excellent adventure." (For information contact the Elders' Institute toll-free at 1-866-794-8888.)

