

# PARTNERS

No. 1

A Newsletter for All Office Bearers from Diaconal Ministries Canada

January 2004

## OPERATION MANNA:

### Getting out there

*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood* (John 1, The Message).

When we think about Jesus' ministry on earth we remember the different people He met right in their own neighbourhood: the Samaritan woman, the centurion's daughter, the 10 lepers, Zaccheus, the crowds of young children and their parents. Jesus spent time teaching in the temple, but He also traveled into communities. He demonstrated to His disciples a revolutionary new way of life: to put aside the familiar ways of living out the Law and put their faith into action with generous works of mercy and compassion.

Jesus' example still applies today. What we study inside the walls of the church must motivate us to travel into subdivisions, community centres and school yards to be a presence in the community. Operation Manna is a program of Diaconal Ministries Canada that supports churches and non-profit Christian ministries that are preparing to step, or have already stepped, into their neighbourhoods.

When the needs seem so much greater than our abilities and resources, let's remember that God is already at work in our communities. He blesses our churches and our communities with many gifts and then reveals how we can use them to reach people who do not yet know of His great love. Are you looking and listening for those opportunities in your neighbourhood?



*Operation Manna helped First CRC in Vancouver reach out into its community by establishing a Fall Kids Fair where children like these could enjoy games and more.*

## FIRST CRC, VANCOUVER >> Fall Kids Fair

### Fun and games... and outreach

At First Vancouver CRC, sometimes it's all fun and games! In September, First CRC partnered with churches in their neighbourhood to host a Fall Kids Fair. There was music, free food, and lots of games in the church parking lot.

It was a fun way to meet children and their parents, and begin to build relationships. This event is just one of the ways the church is connecting with people in the community of East Vancouver.

Janet McPhee is First CRC's new Minister of Outreach. Her position reflects the church's desire to create a vital and flourishing outreach ministry that meets real needs in the community and to disciple and train the people of the church to participate fully in the community.

One of the ways the church is becoming

more aware of issues in their community, is through Janet's participation with the Network of East Vancouver Community Organizations. At first members of this network of non-church community and social service agencies questioned why a church representative would be interested in joining the group. The commitment she brings to the table on behalf of First CRC has demonstrated that the church is eager to play a part in the development of a healthier community.

The new Social Justice Team at First CRC is another opportunity for church members to become equipped to address some of the issues families and individuals in their community face on a daily basis. As more of the church's min-

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NEW LIFE CRC, GUELPH >> Community Kitchen

# Seeing the needs that exist

New Life CRC in Guelph, Ontario set out to answer the question “How can we at New Life more effectively act on the words of Jesus to love your neighbour as yourself?”

The deacons recruited a team of elders, ministry leaders and other interested

people to conduct an opportunity scan of their neighbourhood. They wanted to learn about the community’s demographics, gaps in services, and residents’ priorities, and identify the gifts available within the church to respond. A staff person from Diaconal Ministries Canada provided guidance and suggestions to the team.

One of the recommendations that was adopted by New Life was the creation of a Community Kitchen program. Two kitchens are currently operating at the church. The community women involved in the program learned about it when they were in the church using the *Clothing Closet*, and smelled the wonderful aromas from the kitchen. Some people were encouraged to attend by the deacons who are helping them learn how to manage their finances and make healthier food choices. Others learned about the kitchens through the neighbourhood association that works in partnership with the Community Kitchens program.

People with various gifts—from planning meals to making sure everyone in the group feels welcome—are working together to show Jesus’ love to women in the neighbourhood.

# Fun and games... and outreach

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istries involve children from the neighbourhood, the team’s efforts are becoming focused on social justice issues that affect the lives of children.

Every Thursday night this year the church building will be overflowing with new and familiar faces from the community. The church is planning a weekly community dinner.

Following this informal time of getting to know one another, everyone is invited to participate in one of numerous small group opportunities: Alpha; Pastor’s Class; community Bible study; and special interest groups. What an exciting opportunity for fellowship and learning!

The combination of programs and activities will be different for each church, but the opportunities are there for us to begin connecting in various ways with the people and issues of our communities.



Helping out in the Community Kitchen.

# Operation Manna: a companion for the journey

Operation Manna, a program of Diaconal Ministries Canada, has learned through years of experience what is required to develop effective community ministries. It is committed to being a companion to churches and Christian organizations as they venture into their communities to bring the healing love of Jesus Christ.

Many churches are asking “How can we serve the people in the neighbourhoods surrounding our churches, and in the greater community?” The stories of First CRC in Vancouver and New Life CRC in Guelph, and their partnership with Operation Manna, may inspire you to consider the steps your church could take to be a beacon of light and tower of refuge in your community.

If your church is interested in finding out what opportunities are available for you to respond to the needs in your community and you would like some assistance from Diaconal Ministries Canada staff, please contact us using the website or phone numbers listed on the front page of this newsletter.



## GOING NATIONAL

The support Operation Manna is providing to First CRC in Vancouver is the first partnership the program has developed in Western Canada. Operation Manna is continuing to discover new partnership opportunities in British Columbia and Alberta, and expects to have a fully national program by 2005.

## HELP ALONG THE WAY

As a church or Christian organization embarks on its journey, Diaconal Ministries Canada staff are available to:

- facilitate discussions with diaconates and other church leaders to define outreach ministry and discuss reasons to do it;
- outline methods of identifying ministry opportunities in your community; and,
- share and explore ideas together for new ministries.

## RESOURCES:

### BOOKS:

*Churches That Make a Difference*  
by Ronald J. Sider

*Restorers of Hope*  
by Amy Sherman

