

PARTNERS



A Resource for Church Leaders from Diaconal Ministries Canada

Reaching out in a new direction

By Jennifer Winter

We met yesterday for the first time. Our faces are those of a young mom, a loving grandmother, a female elder, a former youth leader and myself. We got together over coffee to talk about the neighbours...our neighbours! We are the newly formed Community Opportunity Scan (COS) team at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Brockville, Ontario.

At Bethel we are grateful to see how God is using our programs to care and love those in difficult circumstances. We work to listen, to pray and to support each other. Both inside and outside of the church community, we experience brokenness, loss, isolation and struggles that give us opportunities to reach out in love.

However a recent study series on "The Present Future" by Reggie McNeil challenged our thinking about our current ministries and prompted us to discuss questions such as "transforming communities in Christ:" what does that look like? How do we turn our members into missionaries? We heard each other's concerns about barriers that exist in our church to being connected with and reaching out into our community. We talked about not waiting until our entire church was ready for this venture. The Community Opportunity Scan team could lead the way!

This became the springboard for our gathering: we are all called to be missionaries in our communities, our workplaces, our schools, wherever it is that God has placed us. We are certain that when the church is actively seeking to serve its community, the excitement of watching God work through us will spread to others. It begins with us!

God is leading our church in a new direction! Our current ministries may need some re-shaping and reviewing so that we are able to focus more on being the "presence of Jesus" in our neighbourhoods. Many members have expressed the desire to reach into our community: to be

We are all called to be missionaries in our communities, in our workplaces, in our schools, wherever God has placed us.



less about "us" and more about "others."

When we, the COS team, meet and talk about our neighbours, we talk about the varied opportunities that we have to extend the love of Christ. We will continue to reflect and act on the calling to be missionaries, right here in our own community! We eagerly await and anticipate God to show us the work He is calling us to do!



Jennifer Winter is the Ministries Coordinator for Bethel CRC in Brockville, Ontario. She is currently in her second year of the Eastern Canada Leadership Development Network and hopes to become ordained as a Ministry Associate.

For Extra Reading:

The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community
By Hugh Halter & Matt Smay

Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture
By Michael Frost

TAKE NOTE

1. Look for the Operation Manna offering materials arriving at your church in early April.

2. Read more Community Transformation Stories at www.diaconalministries.com/communityministry/cts

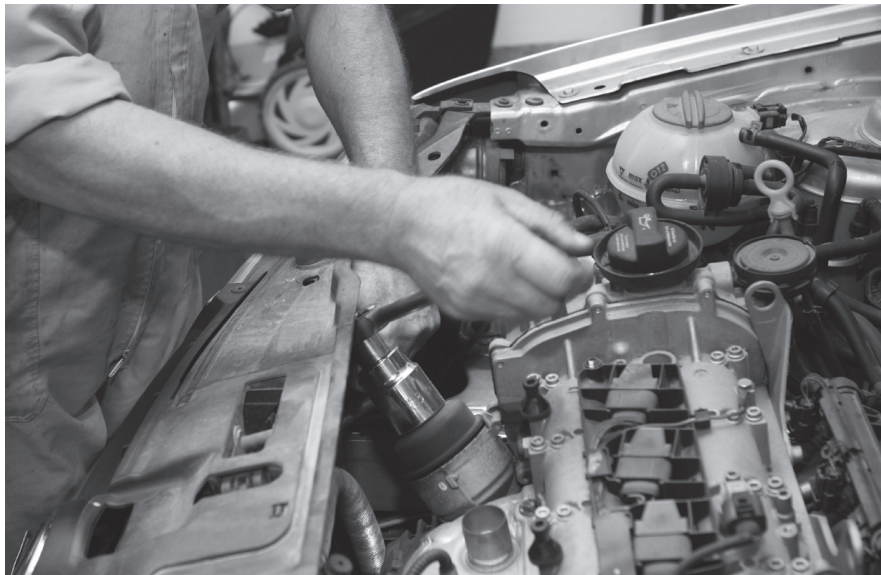
3. A mini-workshop accompanies this issue of *Partners* online, providing a venue for further learning on this topic with other deacons.

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something GREW

This year marks the first time Operation Manna will have a partnership involving automobiles! Started by Maitland River Community Church in Wingham, Ontario, CARS (Christian Automotive Repair Service) is training and assisting low income households to maintain and repair their vehicles.

Operation Manna has been funding local community ministries for more than 30 years, so some might suggest it is an “old” organization. However, Operation Manna is always funding new ministry ideas. The program provides funding and development services to partners for three to four years, so each year Operation Manna works in partnership with both on-going and new partners.

In 2010, Operation Manna is continuing to partner with The Mess, an arts ministry of First CRC in London,



Ontario and Youth for Christ. It provides a safe, positive space for creative expression for street-involved youth. Sketch, RE-create and the Lantern are all similar venues that Operation Manna has funded over the years. Partners borrow ideas and learn from the experiences of those who are doing the same types of ministry in different places.

Look for more examples of community ministries in the brochure that will support the upcoming Operation Manna

Sunday this spring, or read stories of existing ministries under Community Ministry at www.diaconalministries.com. If you have a ministry idea you would like to explore developing in your area, check out the funding guidelines available on DMC's website and contact your regional Community Ministry Developer.

Seizing new opportunities

Prompt us to seize new opportunities to worship God with offerings of wealth, time, and ability. This phrase from the “Form for the Ordination of Deacons” is a direct request made by the congregation to each deacon: “Prompt us. Remind us. Show us how we can worship God with everything that we have!”

Deacons remind us that when we extend mercy and compassion to someone, it is pleasing to God. We celebrate where He is at work in that person's life. We come alongside them and contribute from what we have to help ease their burden. We recognize their giftedness and strengths instead of focusing on deficiencies. We marvel together at God's goodness.

Where do deacons find new opportunities? As gifted leaders, deacons discover new opportunities for their congregations in a variety of ways. Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) encourages deacons and other church leaders to consider:

- Conducting a Community Opportunity Scan (COS). Read about how members of Bethel CRC in Brockville Ontario, are searching for opportunities, “to be missionaries ... wherever it is that God has placed us,” on the front page of this Partners.
- Participating in a “Circle of Chairs” or a similar gathering of deacons facilitated by a Diaconal Ministry Developer. These meetings are an opportunity to hear what other deacons are doing, and creatively work together on new ideas. To find a Diaconal Ministry Developer in your area, check out *About Us* at www.diaconalministries.com.
- Visiting a local Operation Manna partner. DMC, through its Operation Manna program, provides funding and development services to community ministries across Canada. You will soon be able to read about the ministries receiving funding in 2010 when the Operation Manna materials arrive at your church this spring. The stories may inspire your church to become involved or/and provide ideas for starting a new ministry in your own community.

www.DiaconalMinistries.com