

Dear friends in Christ,

One of the things I'm learning as we try to be a faithful congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ is that vital and vibrant congregations are those that definitely "make a difference" in their communities. On the whole, I believe Calvin Church is a congregation that does that. With our unique witness as "a mainstream church with an evangelical heart" I think we do make a difference locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally! There are not many congregations in Abbotsford quite like ours.

Besides offering weekly and seasonal opportunities for the worship of God, we offer a number of opportunities for thoughtful and enjoyable study about the Christian faith and about the Presbyterian or Reformed expression of it. With our caring ways we've managed to continue to attract enough new people to keep our attendance numbers at about 180-200 worshippers each Sunday at two services of worship. That isn't insignificant. But we'll have to invite, provide for and keep and train more people, especially young families and children, if we're to make a real difference in a community that has a lot of successful Christian churches.

Beyond that, we can rejoice that we do, in fact, have many in our congregation who are involved in leadership and service to our community through such church programs as our Downtown Street Ministry, which seeks to minister to those less fortunate than ourselves, and our Care Shares Ministry which primarily ministers to seniors, a number of whom are not from our church. Also, our Pastoral Care Team often touches the lives of people beyond our congregation.

Moreover, we're glad that we have many in our congregation who are involved in leadership and service outside our church in our community. I'll mention a few of these. Some help at the Seniors' Centre; some deliver Meals on Wheels to shut-ins; some volunteer in the Hospital Auxiliary; some are school-crossing guards; some help senior citizens with their tax returns. Some offer leadership in long-term care facilities. Some visit prisoners in the prisons with M2W2. A number of parents and grandparents are also involved with children and youth sports programs. Many of our people participate in a number of service clubs like Kiwanis, Rotary and the Lions.

Further, when our Mission and Outreach Team was meeting at the beginning of this year and reviewing our activities for the past year, as we always do, we realized -- almost by the way -- that, apart from the rather large number of dedicated people at Calvin Church who reach out to others, our congregation has contributed almost \$40,000 of our total \$200,000 offerings for 2007 towards the betterment of others: in the community, in the presbytery, in the province and around the world.

All of our budgeted goals and objectives have been met, and we've made real progress in reaching the target of building our new worship and ministry centre. We received almost \$190,000 this year towards the cost of the new building. City Council's three "readings" of the re-zoning bylaw have been successfully negotiated. We are ready to prepare detailed drawings of the proposed new building. This upcoming year may well be the year we decide to dig up the first shovel of new ground!

All of these ministries of our congregation, and more, both visible and invisible, have been making a difference in our own lives and in the lives of many others! This is the ministry and the mission which beckons us to a future of making an even greater difference in this city and community. Thanks be to God!

And, then, when I think of how many of you have encouraged me in my year as Moderator of the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, there is even more reason to give God thanks for the work that he is doing in and through us. Little did I think when I was nominated in the late fall of 2006 that I would actually be elected by the ministers and elders of our denomination on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007 to serve in this capacity. But, on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, in God's plan, it happened! Subsequently, it has been a humbling and gratifying opportunity to see the wider work of our church in various parts of Canada and among our various overseas partner churches.

I'm given the privilege of learning more about our varied and vital regional, national and international ministries and mission work, and sharing it with you. I'm given the privilege of meeting and ministering to a larger number of God's people beyond the borders of my usual parish, and sharing my experiences with you. And wherever I go, I take you with me. In the places I go and with the people I meet, even with those whom I never see but who may read my articles in the Presbyterian Record, I'm given the privilege of sharing Calvin Church's vision for ministry and mission with a wider world.

I'm particularly grateful to my wife, Colleen, who supports me – as she always does – especially during this moderatorial year. I thank the Session of Calvin Church, and in particular Cathy Thomson, the Clerk, who work with me in leading the affairs of our congregation. I thank Marj Mahood, Marg Smith, Lorraine Kandal, and Susan Swanney for their additional help, beyond their usual ministries, in the office upon the prolonged unwellness this fall of Diane Melanson, our Administrative Assistant, who eventually resigned her position when other opportunities beckoned.

That's why I think Calvin Church is a church that makes a difference!

May God bless you all!

Heartily, in Christ,

Pastor: Hans,