

Christmas 2015

Dear friends and co-workers with Christ,

Karen and I thank you for your friendship and partnership in ministry through another year. Thank you for your faithfulness in service with your local church, the Evangelical Free Church of Canada, EFCCM and our Lower Pacific District.

Once again, writing a Christmas letter gives me opportunity to pause to reflect on and give thanks for the year that has now almost gone by. God has been good and He has been faithful. Writing this letter also gives opportunity for me to pause and to think of each one of you and the churches and ministries that you represent and serve. As I write the notes with the letters I send, I also pray for you and give thanks for the gift of your friendship and ministry.



We are very thankful for our four children, Jon, Tim, Dan and Sarah, our three daughters-in-law, Jackie, Emily and Sara, our four granddaughters, Erin, Miriam, Amy and Carrie and our two grandsons, Malcolm and Wesley. Jon continues to commute to work in Fort McMurray, where he works with Shell in the field of non-destructive testing. I am always glad to pick him up at the airport every second Tuesday, to take him home to Jackie, Erin, Amy and Carrie. Tim and Emily, Miriam, Malcom and Wesley continue to reside in New Westminster, where Tim is pastoring the New Westminster EFC. We are thankful for God's continued good and fresh work there. Daniel and Sara reside in Burnaby. He has now completed his BSc at BCIT, and is working in the field of conservation and environmental studies. Sarah lives at home and is enjoying studying recreational therapy at Douglas College. We are thankful for and blessed by each member of our growing family.

Our district family has also grown this year. First, and most importantly, I am thankful for those who have come to Christ through the people and ministry of our churches! As I travel about our district churches, I am delighted to meet those who have recently come to faith, those who have recently been baptized, and those who can testify to God's good and restorative work in their lives. The gospel is such wonderful news! I firmly believe that when we and our churches focus our attention on our Lord Jesus Christ and sharing the good news, we will enjoy unity and growth. There can be no time to quibble over secondary matters. I am also convinced that in sharing the gospel, we can expect to encounter spiritual warfare and opposition from a culture that is increasingly intolerant to the gospel message. But, this has always been the way.

We have also seen growth through the ministries of our LPD Church Planting Missionaries. By "adopting" missionaries, our district can provide legal employment status for church planters and missionaries as they begin their ministries. This allows them to get plants up and running without the need to first incorporate and set up structures—*those can come later, when the church becomes established.*

Over the course of this year, two church plants "graduated" to become self-governing churches. **The Rock Christian Fellowship** in Ladysmith and **Grace EFC** - (a Mandarin-speaking church that meets in Richmond and Fort Langley) are now functioning as "autonomous and interdependent" (to use our EFCC lingo) members of the LPD and EFCC. As such, their pastors have moved from being LPD Church Planting Missionaries to being called to serve by their local churches. We are thankful for this step in the lives of both churches and also for this fulfillment of our shared mission in the LPD.

In 2015, we witnessed the public launch of **Hope City Church**, our "multi-generational, multi-cultural, English-speaking" church plant with LPD Church Planting Missionaries, Philip and Grace Yung, and now also Weston and Rebecca Lundgren. **New Living Assembly** was birthed in Chilliwack, led by LPD Church Planting Missionaries Noel and Lynda Macasaet, with Charlz and Ruth Sebastian at their side.

We currently have four church planting missionaries serving with our district. They are:

- **Jonathan and Harmony Ng**, serving the downtown east side residents of Vancouver, in partnership with "**Servants Vancouver.**" Jonathan also hopes to serve as a resource to district churches, as we reach out to the "downtown eastsides" of our own neighbourhoods.
- **Philip and Grace Yung**, church planters with **Hope City Church.**
- **Weston and Rebecca Lundgren**, associate church planters with **Hope City Church.**
- **Noel and Lynda Macasaet**, church planters at **New Living Assembly** in Chilliwack

While we celebrate God's fresh work through church planting, we are also thankful for the expansion and revitalization of existing churches. Through our **Church Ministry and Endowment Fund**, our district is currently partnering financially with three district churches to these ends.

- **Langley EFC** has expanded their work by calling **Matt and Val Myers** to serve their *Clayton Campus plant as campus pastor*.
- **Abbotsford EFC** has expanded their work by calling **Dave (Elena) Dreger** to serve as Community Life Director.
- **New West EFC** has expanded their work by calling **Henry and Kim Ngugi** to serve as pastor intern of children and families.

We very much appreciate your partnership in this ministry, as your **gifts to our Lower Pacific District and Church Ministry Endowment Fund** enable us to resource and encourage church planting missionaries and church ministry expansion. *In short, we step out in faith with them!* This year we have committed almost \$40,000 to church planting and to encouraging church ministry expansion. We trust God to enable us to support these workers and works for a similar amount in 2016. ***Your partnership and that of your church is both appreciated and needed.*** We do not charge a fee for services to our missionaries and church plants, so your gifts enable us to serve them, as well as our 31 other churches. Please see our LPD website at <http://www.lpd-efcc.ca/> for more info on giving to this work of God. Giving can be done through your local church, by sending funds to the LPD or online, through **PayPal** on our website.

**Our 2016 LPD Conference will be held on March 4,5, and will be hosted by White Rock Community Church.** Conference theme is, **"Mentoring and Coaching,"** and our presenter will be **Dr. Randy Wollf**, Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies and Practical Theology at ACTS Seminaries.

At our Friday workshop, Randy will present the **COACH** approach to turning conversations into a mentoring/coaching opportunities. As our entire EFCC seeks to become more intentional in developing and mentoring leaders through the initiative of **LeadBeyond**, these skills will also contribute to us as a movement, both now and for the future. **COACH** is not simply the "technique of the day." It represents a biblical approach to discipling and guiding others in their lives, faith and ministry, and we trust that it will be used of God to further God's work in our lives and churches.

Please plan to join us for this important time of sharing together, learning together and providing direction to the ministry of our Lower Pacific District. Our schedule will include the **COACH** workshop on Friday, a dinner celebration with stories of God's work on Friday evening and a Saturday morning time for both teaching and ministry reporting and decisions. We will end off with lunch together, including an informal fellowship lunch and prayer time for ladies in ministry and ministry wives with Karen Stewart and Christine Unruh.

Also, at conference, we anticipate welcoming **two new churches** into our district. These are **Redeemer's Grace Church** in Surrey and **New Living Assembly** in Chilliwack.

We give thanks for how God has been blessing the ministry of our churches over this past year. The gospel is being communicated in eight languages, and in urban, suburban and rural areas. In our diversity, we enjoy a unity of both spirit and purpose, and we look forward to God's continued good work in the year ahead, as we trust Him for at least one additional church plant in 2016. People are being saved. Believers are being discipled. Disciples are being sent. Please visit our LPD website <http://www.lpd-efcc.ca/> for information on our district and also for links to information from the EFCC and EFCCM.

We are thankful for God's faithful work among us, and we trust him for greater things in the year ahead. The mission of our Lower Pacific District is, ***"by God's grace, to encourage and resource our growing family of Churches to reflect Jesus Christ."*** It is our prayer that our work alongside will contribute to your church's ability to share the message of hope in Christ, both within your church body and to the community into which God has placed you. To this end, we have been pleased to welcome Charles Labun onto our district board in 2015, and he is now taking the role of being **"Church Chair Liaison."** He brings a wealth of life and ministry experience, and has served as Chair of Johnston Heights Church. He looks forward to serving as a resource to church chairs and boards in the LPD.

I am thankful for each of our LPD Board Members and for their heart to serve our Lord, you and your church. Thanks to Board Chair, Ron Unruh, and to Bill Steller, Charles Labun, Steve Sharpe, Ben Crumback, Josh Lok, Tim Stewart, Daniel Wong (secretary intern). Also, a special thank you to Debra Walton, who serves wonderfully alongside as our LPD Office Administrator. Thank you!

I thank you for your part in our district family and ministry, and for your part in the lives of our family, Karen and me. We love you in Christ and are honoured to be both your and His servants.

In Christ's family,

Rob and Karen Stewart  
*LPD District superintendent*