

Christmas 2016

*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 five granddaughters, Erin, Miriam, Amy, Carrie and Emma, and our two grandsons, Malcolm and Wesley. Jon continues to commute to work in Fort McMurray, where he is employed 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, Malcolm and Wesley are settling in to Victoria, where Tim is pastoring the Parkdale EFC. We are thankful for God's fresh work there, and for the warm reception that

they have received. Daniel and Sara reside in Burnaby, and are very much enjoying parenthood, with the arrival of their daughter Emma. He is working in the field of conservation and environmental studies, and hopes to begin his Masters Degree. Sarah lives at home and looks forward to graduating with a degree recreational therapy from Douglas College in the spring. We are thankful for and blessed by each member of our continually 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 ministries of our churches! As I visit 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 redemptive 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.

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 these projects. Each missionary candidate undergoes **Assessment** and **Bootcamp** (E4H), and receives **Coaching**. This missionary status allows them to get church plants up and running without the need to first incorporate and set up structures—all that can come later, as the church becomes established.

Over the course of this year, we have begun two new church planting projects. In August, **Nori and Shelly Anderson** moved to Port Alberni, believing that God is calling them to plant a church there. Shelly's father was led to Christ by people of the Port Alberni EFC. Though this church closed in 1971, its legacy lives on. As I write this letter, Nori and Shelly

just had the "soft launch" of "**Hope Community Church**" last Sunday. In September, Richmond Chinese EFC bid farewell to **Allen and Hannah Chang** as Pastor of English Ministries, and since then, they have teamed with **Steve and Gillian Sharpe** and **Daniel and Joyce Wong** in what has come to be known as "**The Steveston Project.**" *Please pray for these church planting projects and the missionaries providing leadership to them.*

**Hope City Church**, our "multi-generational, multi-cultural, English-speaking" church plant with LPD Church Planting Missionaries, **Philip and Grace Yung** continues to grow and to increase its outreach to Central Burnaby. **New Living Assembly** in Chilliwack, led by LPD Church Planting Missionaries **Noel and Lynda Macasaet**, with **Charlz and Ruth Sebastian** at their side continues to reach out to recent immigrants from the Philippines.

As we look to 2017, we anticipate having seven 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 serves 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**
- **Noel and Lynda Macasaet**, church planters at **New Living Assembly** in Chilliwack.
- **Nori and Shelly Anderson**, planting "**Hope Community Church**" in Port Alberni.
- **Allen and Hannah Chang, Daniel and Joyce Wong and Steve and Gillian Sharpe**, the church planting team for the **Steveston Project.**

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!* **Your partnership and that of your church is both appreciated and needed.** Please see our LPD website at <http://www.lpd-efcc.ca/> for more info on giving to these church planting projects. Giving can be done through your local church, by sending funds to the LPD or online, through **PayPal** on our website.

Our **2017 LPD Conference will be held on March 10,11, and will be hosted by Johnston Heights Church.** Conference theme is, "**Revitalize,**" a collaborative focus in our EFCC Family, as we together prioritize being Gospel living and Gospel sharing people.

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 leaders' workshop on Friday, informal dinners with ministry colleagues on Friday evening, and a Saturday morning time for teaching, 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.

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. People are being saved. Believers are being disciplined. 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.

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, Randy Lemke, Steve Sharpe, Ben Crumback, Anthony Yeung, Tim Stewart and Vanessa Siemens (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