



Prairie Region – Contemplating Mission



Ignited by Christ's call, and nourished by Ignatian Spirituality, CLC Prairie Region is sent to connect and collaborate with marginalized people, the Society of Jesus, First Nations, and others, challenging the root causes and effects of isolation and poverty.

For the greater glory of God.

*Discern*Send*Support*Evaluate*

This is the mission statement of Prairie Region, unanimously agreed upon at our last Regional Assembly in 2011. Since then, Prairie Region has pursued and contemplated, lived and worked this mission---a mission which has come to reveal itself in many ways, some of which have surprised many of us. This article will seek to tell about our region by showing a few of the ways that we in Prairie Region hear the call of this mission.

The first and longest part of our mission statement came out of--among other things--our formation work on discerning the Signs of the Times and on social analysis. In its turn, the statement pledges us to continue our discernment and our analysis. For this reason, whenever possible, we in Prairie Region are interested in sharing information and spiritual conversation surrounding the history, issues and interactions of the First Nations with the rest of Canada, and the structures, good and bad, that have remained or arisen in the wake of that. New opportunities for action often arise from this research and conversation, but some of our missionary actions are so longstanding that they are not only currently informed, inspired and



Norval Morrisseau, *Tales of the Story Tree*, 1978

transformed by this conversation, but have also been historical contributors to the personal and communal discernments that informed and inspired the mission statement.

The Classic Mission of Service, with a Humbling Mobius Twist

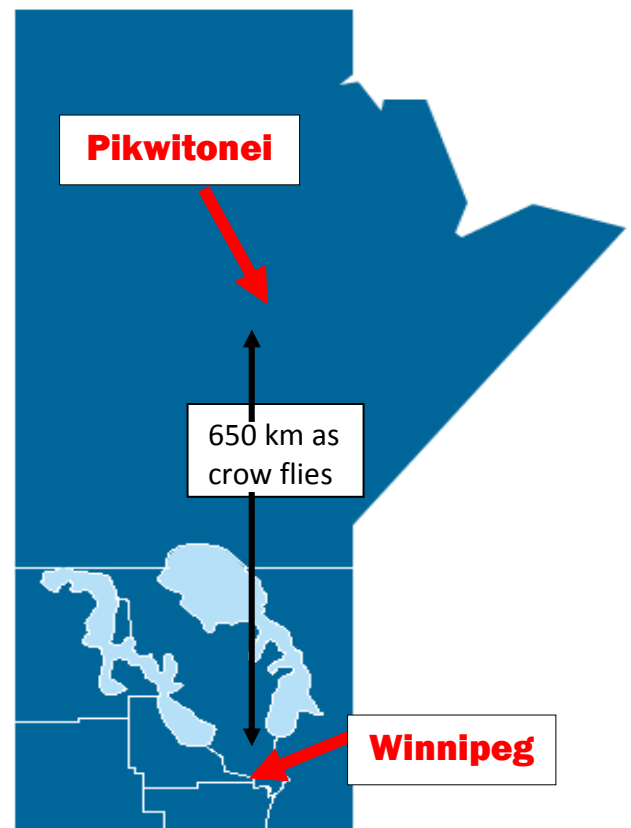
One of the longtime mission commitments of *Koinonia* members is meeting and working alongside community members in Point Douglas, an inner-city community that is one of Winnipeg's oldest communities. Point Douglas harkens back to the very first 1812



After clean-up at ICDI, EA Fr. Charles, with *Oramus*, *Kairos* and *Metanoia* members ...but none from *Koinonia* in this shot. They must still be working hard!

Selkirk Settlers in Red River Colony, Canada's first farm community west of the Great Lakes, and then reaches even further back, to the area's use by First Nations communities for ceremonial purposes. These days people from Point Douglas, our *Koinonia* members, and also many other people from diverse communities and backgrounds across the city (including other CLC groups and Ignatian apostolates), come together every Sunday afternoon at the Immaculate Conception Drop-In (ICDI), where the preparation, serving and sharing of a meal still reflect the area's long-standing heritage of providing food for body and spirit. ICDI, whose watchwords are Respect, Relationship, Community and Reconciliation, is a place of both connection and collaboration; a place where those who are served also serve, and those who serve find themselves well-served.

Another example of providing food for the spirit while being fed in turn is provided by *Diakonia* member Howard, and his wife Esther, who travel from Winnipeg to the remote Northern Manitoba community of Pikwitonei twice each year, once in the summer by bush plane or train, and once in the winter over an adventurous track of frozen "winter roads." In "Pik," a small community of about 100 people, where trapping, fishing, and some wild rice farming provide most of the livelihoods, they offer, under the auspices of [LAMP Ministry](#), a one-week summer Vacation Bible School for the children, as well as evening events for adults. Their winter long-weekend quick visit offers yet more exploration and celebration of God's gifts, as well as a precious chance to reconnect with friends. In this mission too, connection and collaboration emerge as themes, and the two-way, give-and-receive continuous



loop of ministry is again in evidence. As Howard writes, about their last visit to Pikwitonei in August of this year, “the children of Pik continue to minister to us more than we to them.”

These are just two examples of the type and style of mission work that is the kind we most often think of when talking about “mission.” There are many, many more examples of this in the region. Some members work in spiritual direction in the Spiritual Exercises; some are involved with promoting vocations to the Society of Jesus. One volunteers in English classes for adults and children who are new immigrants and refugees; many volunteer in various positions within their various home parishes and religious communities. *Joshua Tree* community, for example, prepares and facilitates many spiritual retreats. Many others do similar things. These are missions that are intentionally chosen as mission. They tend to be relatively long-term, volunteer efforts, initiated in the service of others and



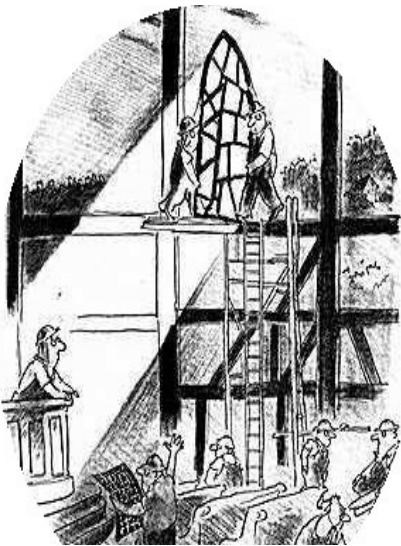
Some members of *Joshua Tree*

eliciting strong and obvious connection and collaboration. These are challenging and valuable, and we know them clearly as mission. But it does turn out that these are by no means the only way we find ourselves fulfilling our regional mission.

The Professional Mission

Many of our members realize that their strongest personal call to mission has actually pulled them into the field of their livelihood. Teacher, social worker, doctor, nurse: many of us have professions which reflect a near life-long response to a call to serve in a very specific way. The work itself is a vocation, often providing unique additional

opportunities for mission, such as those pursued by Glen, a doctor from *Kairos* community, who has accumulated many months in Uganda, working with HIV/AIDS patients—and their health care workers—at the [Infectious Diseases Institute](#), and at Mulago Hospital.



Using our tools and scaffolds in the construction work.

Fr. Charles, our regional EA as well as the national one, is of course an archetypical example of profession as vocation (and/or vice versa?). Through his current residence in Calgary, operating there both as regional EA to Rockies Region and as a Jesuit presence in Calgary, he has been led to various creative new outreach ministries, spreading the word of Ignatian Spirituality, CLC, and various other buttresses and scaffolds in the Ignatian work of building the Kingdom of God.

Not very surprisingly, even those whose livelihoods come from other than the typical service professions have still found ways to integrate our mission ideals of connection and collaboration into their work. In the corporate world, managers use Ignatian strategies to promote collaboration and relevant discernment; elsewhere, designers use listening tools and consensus-building strategies they have learned through CLC.

The Domestic Mission



Metanoia

In contrast to these, one of the least dramatic but most fundamental missions pursued by many members is a “humble” and domestic one. At home, or at least emotionally close to home, members care for family and friends, reinforcing the most primary bonds of connection and collaboration. Many care lovingly for the Incarnations they know and love as aging parents, children, grandchildren and other vulnerable family and friends. Several members of

Metanoia and *Kairos* emphasize this style of mission, and *Kenosis*, often known fondly in the region as our “young families group” until they chose their name, inevitably sees many of its members following this mission path, at least for the foreseeable future.

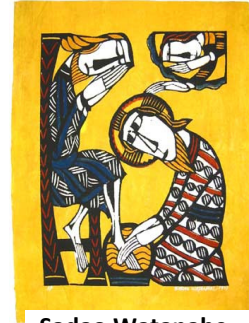
Most of the time, there is little glory and no fanfare here. And often, there’s no acknowledgement to be had, even from ourselves. One member of *Kairos* regularly spends hours on dark and often icy, treacherous stretches of Manitoba highways in order to visit with and assist an aging mother, and to visit with and advocate for a vulnerable sister. This is both demanding and stressful, but we are tempted to dismiss ourselves when this is our work. For those committed to this mission, it can take time, and maybe also a pretty full complement of discernment, sending, supporting and evaluation from community to accept with both mind *and* heart that this is a truly blessed part of one’s mission, and moreover a part that is precious to God despite its apparent “smallness.” Pursuing this mission, one might keep in mind Dorothea, the heroine (yes, the *heroine!*) of George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, whose lifework is so familiarly described in the epilogue sentences of the novel:

Her full nature...spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

A domestic mission certainly opens new windows on the contemplation of the Hidden Life!

The humility required in this mission is a challenge. One slides into the temptation of imagining one can provide even one bold and measurable service, and it’s repeatedly

difficult to discover and accept that one is not being called to even modestly swashbuckling service. As Janice, member of *Kenosis*, once said during a year of maternity leave, after struggling with our regional mission, “In humility, I came to realize that I was not being called to alleviate the isolation of others; rather I was being called to experience isolation and neediness. Like Peter, I had [initially] wanted to wash the feet of Jesus, and could not understand why I would need to have my feet washed by Him. Now, during this time of conversion, I am doing the only thing I can do: uniting myself in prayer to others who suffer from isolation...”



Sadao Watanabe,
Christ Washing the Feet of Peter. 1963.

“Being With” Others

This recognition of the call to “be with” is very much what feeds a primary mission of *Oramus* community, who (along with instances of other outreach in the community) have committed themselves to pray for people: to bear witness to and thus keep healing spiritual company with any who are in need. You will have seen the information in the last edition of *Update* that invited you to send your prayer requests to *Oramus* community (oramus.thunderbay@gmail.com). Their call is to accompany any and all of us in this way.



As, in a sense, are we all so called: all of Prairie Region, all of Canada, all of the world body of CLC. The 2003 Nairobi concord to adopt Discern, Send, Support, Evaluate (DSSE) as our signature CLC process for acting together as one apostolic body calls for all of us to pray with each other, over each other and for each other. We do this as we work “for the greater glory of God” with our brother Christ Jesus, building the Kingdom of God in both the shared and the individual ways we are called to do so. This is why we, together, agreed to add these final two statements -- one of unifying intent; the other of a uniquely unifying action---to our communal mission statement in Prairie Region, and we recognize that they are each both guide and litmus to our communal mission.

For the Greater Glory of God
*Discern * Send * Support * Evaluate*

-submitted by Pat MacRae, *Kairos*
November 22, 2013