

We celebrate these ministries:

ORDAINED MINISTRY

Matthew Heesing, B.A, M.A, M.Div.

**ADMITTED in 2020 to the ORDER OF MINISTRY
FROM ANOTHER DENOMINATION**

The Reverend John C. Rhoad Jr.
from the Presbyterian Church, USA

RETIRING FROM ACTIVE MINISTRY

The Reverend David Lloyd-Pearce

The Reverend Nancy Monteith

The Reverend Stephen Sparks

The Reverend Larry Wright



Matthew Heesing

Ordinand

Matthew Heesing has been actively involved with the United Church of Canada for as long as he can remember: his earliest memories include participating in Sunday School and Youth Group, leading puppet shows for Vacation Bible School, playing violin during Sunday morning worship, and preaching his first sermon at the age of 13. By the time he was a young adult, Matthew had already extensively served on every court of the United Church of Canada: from his local congregational Board (First United Church, Fort Saskatchewan), to Yellowhead Presbytery, Alberta-Northwest Conference, and General Council. He also spent four months working as Overseas Personnel with United Church Partners in Bogota, Colombia.

Matthew went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies at Concordia University of Edmonton, and a Master of Arts in Religious Studies and Theology at St. Mary's University, Halifax. While working on his Masters Thesis ("A Denomination's Dealings with Difference: Considering Recategorization and Mutual Intergroup Differentiation in the Context of the United Church of Canada"), Matthew first felt the stirrings of a call to ordained ministry. It was ultimately after watching the second-season finale of *The West Wing*, however, that Matthew truly felt compelled to start the process of discernment. He applied the very next day.

One year later, Matthew married his now-spouse, Marlee, and together, that same week, they moved to the town of Turner Valley to begin Matthew's student internship at Diamond Valley Pastoral Charge ("The United Church in the Valley"). As a student in the Atlantic School of Theology's Summer Distance M.Div. program, Matthew would spend the next five years balancing both part-time solo ministry and full-time online studies. Every summer, he would travel to Halifax for six weeks of intensive, condensed on-campus course work. His graduate qualitative research project, presented in November of 2020, was titled, "Lessons from Exile: How a Past Natural Disaster Shaped One Church's Leadership in a Pandemic."

Some highlights of Matthew's student ministry include an Advent sermon series titled, "Star Wars and the Christmas Story", along with another series titled, "Disney and Discipleship." In addition, for almost an entire year, the United Church in the Valley, through Matthew's encouragement, courageously replaced their "pews" with tables and chairs, and the Sunday morning sermon time with small group discussion, as part of an experiment titled, *ECHO: Engage Everyone, Cultivate Deeper Community, Help Foster Theological Thinking, and Open Up Scripture*. This was, for Matthew, one of the most meaningful ministry initiatives thus far.

Overall, Matthew cannot imagine a vocation that more fully encompasses all of his gifts and passions, and is immensely grateful for all of the people that have helped to bring him to this point: former ministers (especially Rev. Ken DeMan, Rev. Ed Scarlett, and Rev. Danielle James), family members, friends, mentors, Learning Supervisors (Rev. David Robertson and Rev. Julia Kimmett), colleagues, professors, and the faithful support of both his God-family of First United Church (Fort Saskatchewan) and his incredible Learning Site of the United Church in the Valley.

Matthew, Marlee, and their young daughter currently live in Okotoks, and look forward to starting the new adventure of a call and partnership between the United Church in the Valley, Okotoks United Church, and St. Andrew's United Church (DeWinton) this summer.



The Reverend Nancy Monteith

Retiree

Hi everyone. My name is Nancy Monteith and as of July 1st, I will be retiring.

My journey to ministry has been blessed with many twists and turns. It began at Mayfield United Church, but my views about God were broadened during my time at Cedar Glen and Camp Kehoe. I truly thought I was called to be a teacher, but God had other plans for my life.

After graduating with my Master of Divinity from Queen's in 1981, I decided I wanted more life experience before following my call. I worked as a teacher with a very special group of adults at the Ongwanada Resource Centre, and at the L'Arche community in Stratford, Ontario.

God continued to call me to ministry and so my life as a Staff Associate began at Knox United in Owen Sound and then at Stouffville United Church. Being ordained was something God was determined I would do, no matter how far or how quickly I tried to run. God showed me that I was able when I ministered at King City United. I finally completed my studies when I did my internship at Grande Cache, Alberta.

I was ordained in 2005 and was settled at Port Perry/Prince Albert. From there, I walked with Cheltenham and Ballinafad United Churches where I shared my ministry time with two congregations. Then I came to Jasper United Church. The mountains called me once again.

God has sent me to people who have taught me and supported me well, and for that I feel so grateful. Ministry for me has always been a journey, of learning and growing in faith.

In my retirement time, Glyn and I will move to our new home in Coldstream, B.C., where I hope to spend some time gardening, hiking and skiing, while discovering where the Spirit will lead me next. We also hope to be able to travel in our motorhome as the restrictions are lifted around COVID. It has been a challenging year in ministry and yet I sense the church has been shown that there are new ways to be church together. We still have so much to learn from one another and from the world. God is constantly showing us new ways to be and new ways to live in community together.

I pray for the church and hope that it will always be willing to break down the barriers as Jesus showed so many times. We need to remember that we are stronger together and living in love with the world will always be the higher ground. God bless you all and prayers for the journey.

Rev. Nancy Monteith



Maj (Ret) the Reverend Larry Wright, CD

Retiree

Larry is a native of Edmonton, but spent most of his formative years in Toronto.

After completing his Bachelor of Arts, and Master of Divinity at Victoria and Emmanuel Colleges, he was ordained a United Church minister by Toronto Conference on May 26, 1981. Larry was settled as the minister on the Prairie Neighbours Pastoral Charge in western Saskatchewan, which was later reorganized and renamed Marengo Pastoral Charge. Larry served there until 1987.

In that year he enrolled as a Chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces, completing his basic training in the fall of 1987. During his time in the military, Larry served in Gaagetown, New Brunswick; Wainwright, Alberta; Borden, Ontario; and finally, Edmonton, Alberta. During his military career, Larry deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2002, and to Afghanistan from February to August 2006.

Larry finished his military service as the Brigade Chaplain of 1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, and retired in 2010. Since that time, he has served as the minister of Spirit West United Church in Edmonton.

Larry is married to Margery and has three adult children. Following retirement, he plans to spend more time as the maintenance guy at Kavaccino's Café and Catering in Lacombe, the café owned by his daughter and son-in-law. And Larry will continue to remain active in the area of ecumenical and interfaith relations.



The Reverend Stephen Sparks

Retiree

In a galaxy far, far away; in another time and place, I found myself on bended knee in tears. I was in a state of mourning and greatly bewildered as to my purpose and direction. Lo and behold, I found a lonely Bible on an altar fixed to the passage of Isaiah 49:1-6. It was in that moment, I began to walk to another place and another time, comprehending only dimly the cosmic whisper, saying: **Be, as a page that aches for a word; which speaks on a theme that is timeless.** And so it began ...

I entered Queen's Theological College with little to no appreciation for its scholastic approach. My initial beginning was Sunday School, and the rest I had heard preached from many diverse pulpits. I had a great deal to learn, and grew to acquire a mature faith stance over time. I acquired my Clinical Pastoral Education at the Kingston Maximum Security Penitentiary, and discovered more issues, of a personal nature, for later growth and development. I continued to explore the depths of heart and soul in Naramata Lab programmes: deepening my self-awareness and spiritual cognition; and understanding group dynamics.

I came to Kirk United Church in the City of Edmonton for my field placement and was deeply indebted to those who offered continuous support, challenges and encouragement.

I was ordained June 2, 1985 in Waterloo, Ontario by Hamilton Conference. From there, I journeyed to Delia, Craigmyle and Youngstown, along highway 9 in Alberta; then Whitecourt to Redwater, Abee and Thorhild; and finally, Bonnyville, Alberta. I chaired the Divisions of Church in Society, Finance; and Camp Whitney, a church camp, just south of Bonnyville. I chaired Yellowhead and St. Paul Presbyteries and was exceedingly pleased to be elected as one of your General Council Commissioners in 2018.

I now take my leave, open to the Spirit's leading. I am grateful for the journey and its people. Grateful for lessons learned, however hard or challenging; and for openness to the Spirit's leading and transformation in my life, and the lives of others.

My wife and I will now have time for each other. Though I walk away, I will always be near and never far. The hand is open, and I shall receive what comes my way. This is not an end, but a continual unfolding into God's eternal embrace. Amen!

Your Faithful Servant and Colleague in Christ,
Rev. Stephen Sparks.