

# Common Grace

Stories from the Peltz family's ministry life Summer 2024

Thank You!



*Leading a panel discussion with (left-right) Andrew, Rani, Caleb, and Kelsey during the 2024 KYFC Fundraiser Dinner.*

*About half of the KYFC staff celebrating the end of the ministry year and Katie's retirement together at Joy Bible Camp. (Katie is at the bottom left on the ground)*

In the winter, I shared that I had accepted the invitation to serve as the Interim Director of Kawartha Youth for Christ, which required us to switch our financial support from Vision Ministries Canada to KYFC. We were blown away by how willingly and quickly our supporters made the transition. Thank you so much to everyone who accommodated this unexpected but valuable shift in direction for this season!

Juggling the YFC role with my pastoral and chaplaincy work has definitely resulted in a busier-than-normal schedule. It's not as overloaded as one might expect, since the Trent ministry isn't very dependent on me at this point and Curve Lake Christian Assembly is a small, stable, supportive group of people. Still, the administrative time that I would normally use for sending out updates like this one has been eaten up by supervisory meetings, policy updates, hiring processes, and emails, emails, and more emails! It's a rewarding sort of busy, though. While I wouldn't want to try and persist in juggling these roles long-term (that would definitely lead to burnout), I've told the KYFC Board that I'm willing to stay on until June 2025 if needed. Please pray that God reveals the right person for the long-term role between now and then. I've already seen him provide good people for other vacant roles, so I'm confident he'll provide this need, too!

## Honouring Pam Taylor





*Pam (far right, beside me) at a Bible study early in my time with Curve Lake Christian Assembly.*

*Pam (centre) with her friends Maggie and Ted at the Curve Lake Santa Claus parade. We gave out hot chocolate.*

One of the first events I attended at Curve Lake Christian Assembly was a potluck at one of the congregants' houses. There, I was introduced to a lady named Pam. The only information I had was a comment made by the person who rushed me over to her: "You need to meet Pam - she has lots of questions!" She did, indeed! She told me she had recently been baptized, but was still trying to figure out "all this Jesus stuff." That began the first of many good conversations I would have with her over the next five years.

Pam was raised at Burleigh Falls, home for many Anishinaabeg people. Her parents taught her core native values, such as the need to respect all living things and the importance of gratitude. She also occasionally attended an Evangelical church. Unlike many other residents of Curve Lake and Burleigh Falls, she did not have a good experience there. She found the teaching confusing and, at times, scary. Then, in her young adolescence, a death in her family threw her life into chaos. This began a number of long years in which she lost touch with both her native spirituality and the church. She was proud of the fact that she avoided the most destructive trauma responses, such as alcohol, but she definitely saw the ensuing years as a period of coping, not thriving.

Decades later, she lived in Toronto with a complex family of her own. She began rebuilding her faith. That began with reengaging her native traditions, which she found healing. Tied in with this was a persistent love for food. She worked as a cook and learned to prepare dishes from her culture. This gave her the opportunity to share her traditions with others. She also visited native people in jail and helped them reconnect with their culture. Then, for a variety of reasons, she moved from "the big city" to Curve Lake during her retirement years. That's when she came into contact with Curve Lake Christian Assembly and Pastor George.

Pam loved Pastor George. She credited him with changing her perspective on Christianity. I'm sure that a big part of this is his calm, gentle demeanor, which spills over into his teaching. The thing she most appreciated, however, was a question he asked her once: "What prayers has God answered in your life?" This helped her realize that, even though she had gone through many difficulties, God had faithfully cared for her and her five children. She also realized that she had never consciously thanked him for that. She wanted to know more about what it meant to have a relationship with God, alongside living out the values her parents had taught her.

By the time we met, prayer was an important part of her life. She talked to God all the time, especially when she felt anxious, which was a common experience for her. She was less sure about things like reading the Bible or taking communion. She and I talked about these things. She liked how I responded to her questions. She also appreciated when I suggested that our congregation follow a two-year Bible reading plan and make our way through the entire Bible. As a result, we spent the better part of a year and a half studying the Old Testament. As we did so, she saw many connections between Jewish beliefs and values and the native traditions she was raised with. This, in turn, helped me grow. I worked with native Christians for a decade before meeting Pam, but she was the most interested in exploring how native traditions and Christianity fit together. Her questions sparked lots of good discussions in our worship services and Bible studies. They also sparked questions in my own heart about how my culture shaped my faith. These were formative years for all of us. Pam also cooked lots of yummy food for our communal meals, including traditional foods like wild rice soup and fry bread, which she provided for our monthly communion feasts.

Sadly, on May 13th, Pam called to tell me that she likely had cancer. Her doctors were planning on rushing her through a battery of tests to see how bad it was. I drove out to Curve Lake and we sat by the beach, talking and praying together. Over the coming weeks, the tests and her rapidly-declining health made clear that the cancer had already spread aggressively throughout her body. To everyone's shock and dismay, she passed away on May 30th, just over two weeks after that first concerning report. During those weeks I got to be and talk with her a number of times, including one day and a good portion of one night that I spent in the hospital with her and her family members. She continued to ask deep questions about life and faith. But, she also reassured me that she was not worried about dying. She knew where her spirit journey ended: in God's loving presence. When she told me this, she would cite a friend of hers who died due to cancer a couple of years prior. "She had it right, you know..." Pam would say to me with a pained smile. "Whether I get better or I don't, I'll be a winner."

Miigwetch, Pam, for inviting me into your journey over the past five years. And Miigwetch, Creator, for the gift of Pam's life, and the blessing she was to me and my congregation.

## Ministry Highlights



*Standing with my friend, Kenny, in front of an ebenezer erected to commemorate the fact that Civil Rights activists managed to cross a river and march for voting rights after initially meeting violent resistance.*

*Aliyah and her friends acting in a skit during the Heart to Heart ministry weekend.*

Here are some family and ministry highlights from the past six months:

- In January a good portion of the KYFC staff and I went to Montreal for the annual Eastern Regional Retreat.
- In February I travelled to New Orleans, Jackson, Selma, and Montgomery with ReStory US to learn more about the history of race relations in that region. This trip was facilitated by Calvin Seminary, which my friend Kenny is a part of. I will be attending a follow-up debriefing and learning session in August.

- In March and April I led KYFC through a prayer and discernment process that I previously used with Auburn Bible Chapel called 40 Days of Prayer.
- In April, InterVarsity at Trent surpassed 30 people for the first time since COVID and they elected leaders for the 2024-2025 ministry year.
- Also in April, the Heart to Heart ministry team came to Curve Lake for a weekend of workshops and practical support for congregants and their friends and family.
- From January to April we had a placement student from Master's Bible College with us at Curve Lake Christian Assembly.
- In May I helped run the annual KYFC fundraiser dinner, which raised over \$24,000 to support the work done in Peterborough and the Kawarthas. Aliyah and her friend, Joey, volunteered as waiters alongside Aliyah's youth group.
- At the beginning of May, we helped Danielle and Gerrit move back to Peterborough. They moved into our townhouse complex; it's a joy to have them so close!
- In May, a couple of the Doctor of Ministry students I supported graduated.
- In May and early June, Shoshanna, Aliyah, and I hosted the National Director of Youth for Christ Albania and helped him learn about ministry in Canada.
- At Christmas, Aliyah was given two gift cards to the CN Tower. We went up together to celebrate my birthday and the end of the school year. This meant that between June 6th, 2023 and June 6th, 2024, we got to ascend the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, and the CN Tower. A year to remember for sure!
- In June, I helped teach a Doctor of Ministry course alongside a professor I studied under during my time in the program. This is the fourth time I've helped teach the course since graduating.
- Also in June, I went with a couple of KYFC staff to the Youth for Christ Canada National Conference, which included a celebration of YFC Canada's 80th anniversary.
- In June, Shoshanna and Aliyah finished Aliyah's grade 7 curriculum.
- As I write this, we are preparing to drive to Camp Joli-B after church on Sunday. We will be attending the annual English Family Camp that I grew up going to. I will be speaking on reconciliation.





*A walk in the park with newly-returned Gerrit, Danielle, and Shadow*

*Aliyah, Shoshanna, and me at the top of the CN tower, overlooking Naomi and Steven's apartment*



My work is made possible by generous individuals and organizations. Thank you to everyone who partners with me and provides the financial, emotional, and spiritual support my family and I need! Over the course of 2024, I need to raise an extra \$1000/month in recurring or one-time donations. So far, we've managed to meet that mark! Please prayerfully consider whether you can help throughout the rest of the year. For more information on my ministry, including how to donate, you can email me at [benkpeltz@gmail.com](mailto:benkpeltz@gmail.com) or visit [benpeltz.ca/support](http://benpeltz.ca/support). My work, and all donations towards it, are managed by Kawartha YFC. For more information on them, visit [yfc.ca/kawartha](http://yfc.ca/kawartha).



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