150 YEARS

VISIONS *of* HOPE

Celebrating 150 Years of
Catholic Health Care in Alberta

Before Canada became a nation,

Before Alberta was born,

Before railroads crossed the prairies...

Our Catholic health ministry had already begun.

Audacious spirit

Our health ministry began with an aged man who sought care from the Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Montreal in November 1863—42 years before Alberta became a province.

Our calling to provide compassionate care to those in need started in that moment and has continued 150 years strong. Steeled by a deep faith, the Sisters cared for the sick, vulnerable and forgotten with resourcefulness and respect nurturing them—body, mind and soul.

Alberta's history has strong connections to our founding congregations—courageous women who helped pioneer the many towns and cities that have become the backbone of our province.

1863

Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Montreal open first hospital in the Northwest Territory, in St. Albert.

1867

Canada becomes a confederation.[1]

1884

Calgary incorporated as town: population 400.[2]

First telephone comes to Alberta.

1895

Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) of Montreal open Edmonton General Hospital.

1896 – Klondike Gold Rush begins; three Canadian routes depart from Edmonton.[2]

1900

Misericordia Sisters open a small maternity hospital – the Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton.

1905

Alberta officially becomes a province; Edmonton is the capital city.[2]

1906 – First x-ray unit comes to Alberta.

Grace under fire

In the decade before World War I and the decade after, the Sisters' resilience and unwavering commitment to responding to unmet needs enabled them to open several hospitals in the province, six of which exist today as part of the Covenant family.

Among those treated in our facilities were soldiers who often faced a brutal and lengthy physical and emotional recovery. Some also returned with another terrible ailment: Spanish influenza, an unusually deadly flu virus that spread rapidly.

Despite the risks, our doctors and nurses cared for every patient who came through our doors with grace and courage, living the ministry of Jesus and recognizing that everyone is a reflection of the divine, deserving of love and care.

1909

Sisters of Charity, Notre Dame d'Evron open St. Mary's Hospital in Trochu.

1910

Sisters of Charity, Notre Dame d'Evron establish St. Joseph's General Hospital in Vegreville.

1911

Daughters of Wisdom establish Our Lady of the Rosary Hospital in Castor.

1914–1918

World War I.[2]

Close quarters and massive troop movements hasten spread of Spanish flu pandemic in **1918-1919.** Millions die worldwide, including 50,000 in Canada. Pandemic reaches Alberta.

1919

Sisters of Charity, Notre Dame d'Evron establish St. Louis Hospital in Bonnyville.

1921 – Banting and Best develop insulin for diabetes treatment.[3]

1924

Sisters of Providence, St. Vincent de Paul establish St. Mary's Hospital in Camrose.

Steady fortitude

The Roaring 20s, filled with optimism, gave way to despair in the 30s with the stock market crash and terrible drought. Resources were scarce and it was common to find a stranger walking through our hospitals in search of food, shelter—and perhaps a bit of comfort.

When World War II broke we trained medics and tended to the hearts and bodies of wounded soldiers and their families. Polio and tuberculosis came on the heels of the War and we adapted—repurposing beds to create sanatoriums and offering specialized rehabilitation services.

Soon after, oil was discovered in Leduc and with it came a boom, drawing more people—and greater demand for health services—to our province. We responded to that call.

1927

Sisters of Providence, St. Vincent de Paul establish St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital in Edmonton.

1928 – Sir Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin.[4]

1929

Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate, Ukraine open Mary Immaculate Hospital in Mundare.

Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish open St. Michael's General Hospital in Lethbridge.

1929-1939 – Great Depression; stock market crash

1930

Sisters of St. Martha establish Banff Mineral Springs Hospital.

Sisters of St. Joseph, London establish Killam General Hospital.

Albertans face Depression and Dust Bowl.

1939-1945

World War II.[2]

Sisters contribute to the war effort, training medics and caring for convalescent soldiers.

1945 – First influenza vaccine developed.

1947

Oil discovered at Leduc No. 1; oil boom begins in Alberta.[2]

1951

Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus open St. Joseph's Home in Medicine Hat.

1953 – Polio epidemic arrives in Edmonton.[2]

Vision of hope

Through boom and bust, pandemics and epidemics, wildfires, floods and tornadoes, Catholic health care has been present, meeting the needs of communities with quality care and service. Today, our Covenant family continues to respond to our communities as a key partner in one integrated health system with Alberta Health Services.

For 150 years we have been innovators seeking to be of service. Our commitment to caring for Albertans, like the Sisters before us, is resolute. It is expressed each day by those who work and care for patients, residents and their families in Catholic facilities across our province.

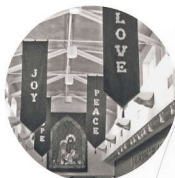We are proud that our ministry is flourishing, offering a vision of hope now and for the future.

1986

St. Louis Hospital and Duclos Hospital in Bonnyville are amalgamated to become Bonnyville Health Centre.

1988

Grey Nuns Hospital opens in Edmonton; Edmonton General transitions into seniors care.

1992 – Caritas Health Group established with consolidation of Grey Nuns, Edmonton General, Misericordia sites.

2000

St. Michael's Health Centre in Lethbridge opens, replacing former St. Michael's Hospital.

2005 – Martha's House opens in Lethbridge.

2008

St. Therese Villa opens in Lethbridge.

Youville Home in St. Albert becomes part of Caritas Health Group.

Covenant Health is established with consolidation of 16 Catholic health care facilities in 11 communities across the province.

2011

Villa Caritas opens in Edmonton.

St. Joseph's Home in Medicine Hat joins Covenant Health.

Monument to the Sisters unveiled at Alberta legislature.

2013

150th anniversary of Catholic health care in Alberta.

Covenant Health

Covenant Care

As leaders in seniors care, our Covenant family is proud to expand our services to Calgary and Red Deer, opening three new supportive living facilities in 2014.

Holy Cross Manor and St. Marguerite Manor in Calgary's Evanston neighbourhood will be home to 229 residents and, in Red Deer's Clearview neighbourhood, 100 seniors will call Villa Marie home.

We are pleased to be pioneering a flexible and adaptive model of care that promotes independence and meets seniors' changing needs.

CovenantHealth.ca