

Prepared comments from panelists in response to Rev. Jonathan Hong's presentation to the Renewal Fellowship's 2020 Renewal Day.

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REV. CHRISTINE O'REILLY: I would like to thank Jonathan for honesty and humility and insights. . . . We need to repent. We need to repent of the racism and dismissive attitudes that are and have been within our denomination for years. We white folks need to listen with humility and patience, and with a teachable spirit. We have much to learn, and we need to learn and to recognize that Christendom and the white Anglo-dominant culture is long gone. I appreciate the faithfulness and deep joy found among our Korean, Arabic, Taiwanese, Chinese and other congregations. You enrich us, you teach us and lead us to deeper faith and higher praise . . . And we do well to be careful with our words and promises, which may come across as threats and manipulation. . . . Yes, Jesus expressed anger. His anger was directed at those who believed they were holier and more faithful, more pleasing to God than others. And we must take great care, and with humble honest personal reflection, make sure we are not becoming Pharisees, in our actions and attitudes. I trust Jesus' righteous anger far more than my own, and anger at others is not a foundation upon which to build faithfulness, or love or witness for Christ.

We need to recognize as Jonathan has known that as with diversity within cultures, there is a diversity within evangelicals within the PCC. So I believe as evangelicals we're in agreement with a high view of Scripture and Christology, mission and evangelism, and that we would be united in a traditional view of marriage and sexuality. There are and will be evangelicals who feel called to remain within the PCC regardless of the final votes on remits 'B' and 'B' and evangelicals who feel called to pursue some affiliation outside of the PCC regardless of the final vote. . . . How we treat each other within the evangelical community in the PCC is important. How we speak and act and post and write about everyone matters. Thank you, Jonathan for your example of clarity and conviction that is also deeply respectful and loving. And that's one thing I've appreciated so much about Jonathan's presentation is his tone. He speaks with such firm conviction, but also with deep humility and respect for those who think and believe differently. Jonathan rightly addressed the matter of how we are to be actively loving those who hold views about marriage and sexuality that differ from ours, and that we show real love. We spend a lot of time and energy what we disagree with in the proposed doctrinal and policy changes. I believe we must spend more energy on what we are for. What makes traditional marriage a good and sacred thing. How single youth and adults can live fulfilled and loved lives. If what we are asking is that sexual expression belongs only in traditional heterosexual marriage, then as a church, we must just as passionately offer the love, companionship, belonging, acceptance and community to those who believe scripture commands to be celibate. And we have not, in my humble opinion, done this well in the church. We say we are friendly and welcoming. But how many singles go home each Sunday to eat alone? How do our language, images and programs include those not married? Include the single parent, include the teenager who's sorting out their sexuality, include couples who struggle with infertility. How do we address the matter of suicide among youth and adults who struggle with sexual orientation? "What would Jesus do?" — to ask that old question. This is an area we need to be deeply aware of and speak of and seek help and repent of our hurtful and sometimes hateful silence, actions and attitudes. Not in ways that seem right just to us but how it will be heard and experienced by the other. We need to speak with

deep compassion, I believe, even with tears, to those who feel desperately alone, hopeless, unwelcome and unwanted and wonder if the love of God in Christ extends to them. I agree with the desire of our Han-ca brothers and sisters to find, create, petition and work through our polity for a place within the PCC that allows and affirms evangelicals to move forward in mission and in ministry. What we believe around scripture, Christology, evangelism, missiology, the authority and application of Scripture matters because it impacts everything else. Our theology of sin, the cross and redemption in Jesus Christ influences everything else that we do. I'm intrigued with his vision of a mediator, rather than just majority vote. We need to find a way. How we achieve that is a huge question. As a former moderator said in his end-of-time sermon, we don't like each other. We are at a crossroads in the PCC where a historic moment for which we truly need to be followers of Jesus Christ. And as evangelicals, we should be the most loving, courageous and joyful people, because we trust Him as Lord and we will live out our commitments as humility and boldness. I believe that God is up to something. And that the Lord is not finished with us yet.

REV. DOUGLAS ROLLWAGE: I share with you somewhat of an outsider experience, having been raised in Canada but in a secular culturally-German home and coming to the Christian faith, only in my teens through the efforts of a Pentecostal youth group in my high school . . . I quickly learned the value of daily scripture reading and study, and a deep and abiding respect for the Bible, and I remained grateful for that important foundational beginning. I enrolled in Eastern Pentecostal Bible College with the intent to enter the ministry. And unfortunately the college and I were a bad fit. My many questions regarding the formation of the Bible, the relationship between various parts of Scripture and the history of the Christian faith went largely unanswered. And the administration encouraged me not to return. Taking a year away from college and somewhat lost with other denominational home in which I felt that I belonged I fell into a spiritual depression. And my mother said, "you're German, read Luther." Our library had a copy of Luther's Table Talk, which quickly led me into the rest of Luther, under whose guidance I developed a thoroughly Reformed faith. United Church minister friends started feeding me CS Lewis which broadened my grasp of the intellectual underpinnings of faith. And then while studying at the theological colleges in Saskatoon, I was introduced to the patristics, the earliest post-physical expressions of the faith and then crucially to Calvin for the Institutes. It was in Calvin that I discovered my theological home. Luther had my heart but Calvin had my convictions. And I searched for a home in the reformed tradition. By this time, I was pursuing a master's degree at Queens Theological College. And there I met Stephen Faris who invited me to his church, Trinity Presbyterian, in Amherstview. My wife and I soon became members and ultimately was in Trinity where I was ordained following a master's at Knox. My master's thesis at Queen's is entitled The References to the Greek Fathers and Calvin's Institutes: their purpose and influence. And this topic reflected my interest in the theology of the reformers and the Patristics. Both Luther and Calvin were regarded as top-flite patristic scholars, and both defended their theology and adherence to the theology of an earlier age back to the earliest councils, and of course back to the Scriptures themselves. It seemed to me already in the mid 1980s that our theological colleges were no longer taking church history as seriously as they should. Queens had dropped church history courses as the requirements for the degree and other colleges were well along that path. During my time at Knox the church history courses were often regarded with mild eye-rolling scorn and something to be endured rather than benefit from. My other observation throughout my degrees is how courses in biblical studies were conducted.

Students were provided with numerous tools on how to reconstruct the scriptures, but few tools on how to return the living, breathing documents so they witness to Christ in the experience of those closest to him. I found in my fellow students a loss of the first love which led them to ministry in the first place. I'm convinced that these two factors, this disassociation with the history of the faith, and our analytical but impersonal relationship with Scripture, particularly among the clergy, have led us to our current condition. When I contrast this with the enthusiasm within my congregations, when exposed to the personages and events of church history, the tremendous response to our Bible study programs, I see that hunger and interest among laypeople is unabated. It's a failure in congregational and denominational leadership and an educational system which reconstructs but rarely rebuilds the faith of ministry candidates, which I see as the root of much of the problem.

I addressed this issue in my sermon as moderator at the 143rd General Assembly in Kingston. And when meeting afterwards with the principals of our colleges I asked if I had been unduly harsh on the colleges, and one of the principals responded, "not harsh enough." But I'm not here to ascribe blame, rather to offer a diagnosis. If we as a denomination do not know who we are, we can be anybody. If we do not know what we believe the roots of those beliefs and why those core beliefs are important, we can believe anything. And if we no longer regard the Apostolic Faith as both fundamental and normative, then we can turn anywhere for the basis of newly formed beliefs or, as Jonathan rightly quoted, everyone did as they saw fit. The catch phrase "reformed and always reforming" has been taken out of its proper context from drawing ever closer to the church which most closely resembles and reflects the Apostolic Faith and has instead been employed to give license to leading itself further away from his foundations. As a Minister of word and sacrament and teaching elder I believe that a core component of my calling is to receive, teach, propagate and defend the Apostolic Faith. And that calling remains no matter the winds of denominational change. That apostolic faith is founded in the personal experience of the life and witness of Jesus Christ, proclaimed in the scriptures, outlined in the Creeds, affirmed in the councils and forms the basis of the Reformation which gave our denomination birth. I believe that my continued role within our denomination is to be a source of stability in the face of cultural denominational and theological change. As the minister of a thriving theologically conservative congregation, we are often regarded by newcomers as a theological refuge. The need for such congregations within the PCC will only increase as the denomination becomes ever more distant from its historical and theological roots. My moderatorial visits to our Arabic and Korean congregations, to our Han-ca presbyteries and to Korea itself for its 101st General Assembly showed me congregations in which the faith was vibrant and alive, where a love for the scriptures and a deep respect for the history of the faith, and where a rootedness in our calling as followers of Jesus was strong. To lose the vitality, strength and witness of these congregations would be a heavy blow for the PCC's future. Instead I pray that there would be a recognition of a new role for conservative and theologically evangelical congregations within our denomination, that role being a witness to a truly living faith. Again, I express my thanks to Jonathan for his words, and to the Renewal Fellowship for this opportunity.

REV. FRANCES SAVILL: One of the things that Jonathan quoted from, the petition, I just want to read again. . . . So in the PCC we see the increasing erosion of the unity, clear direction and purpose that our subordinate standards once provided. What now serves as their replacement, and is able to get again to bring us together? Jonathan in the petition talks about

focus of subordinate standards and scripture are now subordinated to allow more clarion calls of justice, the contents of which are handed down by a politically correct culture. And I was thinking about this statement. And, in light of the congregation where I serve, there are people who I would be at odds with in the view in the discussion around same-sex marriage, but fewer people actually on the authority in place of Scripture, and the overall interpretation of Scripture. We agree still on far more than separates us. And so I was thinking more about, you know, what does bring us together. And I was thinking about Doug's call to understanding our history and our foundations and scriptures and Jonathan's call to listen to those within the wider Presbyterian Church, multiple forms of Presbyterianism, larger Christian community as really being the key of what still can call us together and be our foundation and I appreciate it Jonathan, you applied this so fully to the text, and applied the text only to yourself and to do that within the historical community, and a range of voices seems to me to be very important. And then the second part of that, doing that while living together and Jonathan, your claim for needing to do that locally in proximity to each other, being the place where these important communications can really have to happen as being the place where there really is the possibility for change. Jonathan, I really appreciated you saying that we are to represent Christ as best we can and to work for the renewal, as much as possible, within The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and as I was thinking about those comments a couple things came to mind for me. First was a book. Some of you may have read the Tale of Three Kings, which talks about David, or at the beginning of David before he became King, in dealing with Saul, who is a crazy king. But though Saul is crazy, he is still David's and is still God's anointed king. And David is not free to raise his hands against Saul. David doesn't lead a rebellion against him. And David continues to do what is right and to trust that God is working. And I am reminded that Jesus is still King and head of the church. And He is still able to accomplish His will in his church. And I caution myself that I do not want to find myself in rebellion against the Lord that I'm seeking to serve and. And so, Jonathan, when we're talking about our means and our ends needing to align, I think that's really crucial in all of that. Now, there is a time when David has to leave, when he is when he is forced out by Saul. But David continues to allow and to expect that God is going to work. And I am reminded that God's timeline is often very different. And also I'm reminded that Jesus says, you know, that it only takes a little leaven to raise a whole batch of flour, the gospel has great power so the Holy Spirit still changes lives. God is still on the throne and the battle is still very much the Lord's. Easter reminds us that God is in the business of bringing new life and hope to disciples who are giving up and we're heading out of town. And I am reminded of that as hope. I am also reminded in this Easter season that resurrection comes out again.

There was so much that I appreciated in your presentation and I know that people are asking can they get copies of it and I would really commend them to read it over because there's so much that is rich and helpful in it. I appreciated that you're pointing out how loving and kindness often is equated with blind acceptance to the will of the individual. Even when Scripture teaches us so clearly that our rebellions are always damaging to our relationships with one another and with God. And what our culture teaches us is often not what is God's best for us. I'm grateful that I served with you folks with you who are on the panel with Jonathan with the Renewal Fellowship with the larger Presbyterian Church in Canada. And with those great cloud of witnesses that surround us are part of the whole body of Christ. We are in a time where we only have partial answers at best, but I'm glad to be working it out with you folks and thankful for the Renewal Fellowship for this opportunity to be a part of the conversation.