

Renewal News!

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The Renewal Fellowship within The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a means to contact and encourage those concerned about the evangelical renewal of the PCC.

Our mission:
To lead each other and The Presbyterian Church in Canada to authentic Biblical thinking, powerful Spirit-led prayer and effective Gospel witness.

Our executive director is available to meet and speak ONLINE to congregations and groups weekdays or on Sundays.
Contact info Page 8.

The Renewal News is a quarterly publication of Renewal Fellowship.

We welcome your stories

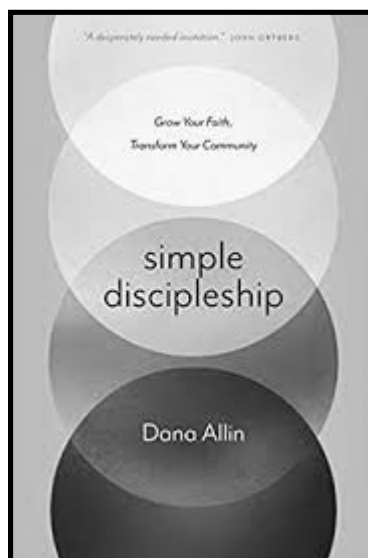
Where are all the disciples?

Special cohort offered to PCC pastors and elders

By **Andy Cornell**
Executive director

The COVID-19 pandemic has touched a lot of church people in a lot of ways. It continues to poke and prod and forces us to examine and re-examine who we are and how we do church. Even why.

In all the busyness of doing church and worship differently since March, I've become a tech trouble shooter as much as a teacher — a problem-solver pastor. With safe distancing and mandatory masking, many congregations are waiting for a vaccine before gathering in person. And even those congregations who are meeting are getting a fraction of their usual turnout. While we see evidence of unchurched folks checking out our social media and YouTube channels, we're not seeing a wave of seekers. My church office phone has been silent. No one's reached out by email or knocked on my door.



Surely this is not the future of the church: an insular group with unpublished Zoom links and posted messages and little contact with ordinary people.

How now are we to practice the Great Commission? If it was a nagging question with an uncertain answer prior to the pandemic, it's crying out even louder now.

During our summer of COVID discontent, I came across Flourish, the training arm of ECO — A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. They were offering a special six-week online gathering on discipleship.

It was billed this way: "Flourishing Churches are led by Flourishing Leaders who are Flourishing Disciples. We cannot have a flourishing vibrant church if we are not, at our core, developing a greater quantity and quality of disciples. Perhaps during this pandemic season the Lord is refining our churches and our ministries to help us focus on our main task of disciple making."

Continued on Page 5

A question of identity

"If God's presence and work are not understood to define who we are and what we are doing, nothing we come up with will be understood and lived properly."

— Eugene Peterson,
Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places

By **Jillian McWhinnie**
Renewal Board member

Who is Jesus? Who am I? Who is the church of Jesus Christ? None of these questions are straightforward to answer; indeed, many spend their entire lives pondering them. It is not by accident either that I write these questions side-

by-side. It seems to me that, from the standpoint of a Christian worldview, these questions go together. One cannot be answered without the others also being addressed in some way. I also find that, amidst the noise and busyness of our world today, it is very easy to neglect wrestling with these questions on both personal and corporate levels. (And I'll be the first to admit that when I wake up in the morning it takes a while for my brain to stop buzzing, and a considerable dose of willpower to not immediately turn on my phone to see if I've missed out on anything while I was asleep!)

Continued on Page 3

‘Rediscover’ the new Wineskin

By Diane Eaton
Renewal board member

The headline “We Need to Create New Wineskins” (Renewal News, summer 2020, p. 2) caught my attention. It seems theologically inaccurate, for Christ Himself created the New Wineskin. The best we can do is design new versions of the old wineskin. But that can’t hold the “wine” Christ offers to cure the root heart malady. Thus it rejects God’s program. We’d be more honest in declaring: *We need to RE-DISCOVER the New Wineskins*. We need to re-discover the Saviour, to be re-evangelized ourselves.

Recently, I showed my preteen granddaughters Rembrandt’s famous art piece, “*The Return of the Prodigal Son*” (pictured on this page.) You’ll know that parable, where Jesus essentially contrasts old and new wineskin theologies. I asked the girls to examine Rembrandt’s use of light and describe where the light drew their eyes. They saw it instantly: It’s the Father’s hands pressed affectionately into his returning son’s back. The shabby son is seen collapsed to his knees burying his head in the Father’s

bosom. Nearby stands his upright elder brother, well-dressed, staunch and disapproving. He portrays the religious community who had put their trust in the old wineskin – the forms, traditions, edifices, their “orthodoxy” etc.

The elder brother still portrays those zealous for purity and orthodoxy but deficient in the experience of redemptive grace. This could be our own problem, why we say so little about New Wineskin promises and focus so much on rips in the old wineskin. Oh sure, current worldly trends contribute to the collapse of our PCC, but so do our own deficits as conservatives.

My granddaughters are unchurched and totally immersed in the “younger brother” worldview: freedom from the past, free morality, etc. I want the girls to



know NOW that, no matter what happens with them, there is a heavenly Father who welcomes returning prodigals and offers new Life in Christ. I pray that God shields these girls from two predominant types of religious folk: those who focus primarily on impurities and those who deny or absolve those impurities. Both ways bypass the Saviour as the author of abundant New Life.

I’m convinced that Renewal Fellowship, like Rembrandt, should consistently paint the strongest light where it belongs: on Christ’s hope for sinners — whether these lost ones be unchurched or churched, liberal or conservative, them or us. Otherwise we’re orthodox and evangelical merely in self-claim.

Continued on Page 8

‘Kneeling in prayer, standing for recovery’

By Rev. James Statham

In “We Need to Create New Wineskins,” I had written about PCC clergy being able to recover Biblical marriage within the context of a new “wineskin.” Creating a new wineskin is not foreign to the PCC. It was done in 1875 and in 1925 when there was a resetting of a basis for common unity through the creation of new formal structural unions. Many of us have been lamenting the “diluting of the wine” in the PCC and I concur with Diane that the primary need for all of us is to “face our own spiritual/theological bankruptcy” and to “rediscover the Saviour.” When it comes to a thorough spiritual self examination, few are more grindingly honest than William Beveridge: “I cannot pray but I sin. I cannot preach or hear a sermon, but I sin. I cannot give alms or receive the sacrament, but I sin. I can’t so much as confess my sins, but my confessions are further aggravations of them. My repentance needs to be repented of, my tears need washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer.”

Wine and wineskin are of course just metaphors. At the Cana wedding, Jesus is

the “new wine,” the best offered last. Jesus forewarns that this new wine will burst the old wineskin of Judaism. Good metaphors reflect reality. Jesus uses metaphor and stories to reflect the realities of life and especially of what God is like. I, too, like the story of the Lost Son. In fact, I now see that Henri Nouwen’s book, *The Return of the Prodigal* is missing again from my library. I have been in the habit of lending out copies. And I have a file of 8x12 copies of Rembrandt’s painting to hand out to seekers that they also might return home. A large copy of his interpretation hangs on the back wall of the church I attend. I too love the hands. Such is the God. One is larger and firmly holds the son close while the smaller one tenderly comforts. This parable is one of three told by Christ to answer the question of why he eats with sinners. They are about God seeking lost sheep and a lost coin. Then there is a lost son — but nobody went out looking for the lost son. He had to come to his senses. It was the task of the standoffish elder brother to seek but he only did his duty and was, as you say, “deficient in his experience of redemptive grace.” We in PCC organisations such as

The Renewal Fellowship and PSALT, are sometimes unfairly typecast as “elder brothers” or to use your words, “ineffective reactionaries of polarized issues.” We are actually kneeling in prayer and standing up for a recovery in the PCC of a lost gospel. Things get lost. People get lost. I share with you an active desire that the essential message of “Christ’s hope for sinners” be not lost from our pulpits.

Response

Christ calls us to go forth seeking the lost. But our culture now mandates that no one is lost, no one is right, no one is wrong. All lifestyles must be endorsed. But a society that tries to say “yes” to everything eventually implodes. So too will a church. The PCC is in danger of saying an unbiblical “yes” re human sexuality/marriage so many of us are now having to point to where God says “no” in his Word and to explain why God’s “yes” is best and life-giving. It is possible to see the good and the love of God not just in his “yes” but also when his Word says “no.” If the Word of God is accepted in repentance and humility it starts the process of a life changed for the good, for now and for eternity.

A question of identity

Unfocused and distracted, we need a foundation

Continued from Page 1

This observation that we tend to be a distracted and unfocused society is primarily based on my own experience and conversations with others, but I don't think I'm alone in having this view. Given certain conditions, it's not very hard for us to lose sight of our identity as individual Christ followers, and as the church.

The word *identity* comes from the Latin word *idem*, which means "same". Thus, one's "identity" — although abstract in nature — might be described as the essence or substance of one's personality. This essence is consistent, united and the same, through and through. Beyond this internal consistency, there is also a sense that one's identity can be known only through comparison to something external to which it may or may not bear resemblance. If this is indeed the case, then whatever this external "something" is, it is also probably important to pay attention to. I don't think it will surprise most readers that, for many Christians, this external "something" is the Triune God. From the creation account in Genesis, we read that God's intent is that humankind is to be made in His image. From the very beginning, God made human beings to be like Him and to be in relationship, or communion, with Him. Of course, in Genesis 3, the tide turns when humanity mistrusts and disobeys God, leading to sin and the fall. One of the consequences of the fall is that we tend to forget our identity as God's image bearers and instead rely on our own ability to determine who we are. We so easily forget the God who made us, and we often fall into conforming ourselves to the image of other "gods" and other idols of this world. And it doesn't stop there. Our identity shapes all that we think, say and do. Our interactions with our world and with each other are shaped by our identity and our oneness (or lack of) with God, whether we are aware of it or not.

So if we believe our identities are tied to who God is, perhaps we would do well to first reflect on the question "Who is God?" (And, as mentioned above, this reflection process is a daily, lifelong pursuit of coming to know God). We come to know who God is through God revealing himself to us most definitively in Jesus, but we also have the words and stories of the Old and New Testament which attest to God's character. God is also still active

and speaking in the world today through his Holy Spirit. And what do we know about God? We know that God is love. He loves with a self-giving, self-sacrificial love and he cares for the sick, poor, weary and outcast. We know that God is just and merciful. He doesn't ignore our sin, but we trust that, through Jesus, he has rescued us from the sin and death that so easily entangles and invites us to follow him into life.

When we truly know who God is, it helps us to know who we are — beloved, image-bearers called to love and obey God, and to love our neighbours. When we don't know or remember who God is, or who we are, we can be quick to respond to the social and political issues of our day in ways that actually aren't helpful or loving. In a culture that is on edge and in which issues are highly politicized, it is so easy to react and to start name-calling and blaming. And, slowly and subtly, we may find that our life and faith in Jesus erodes such that we are consumed only with asserting our own beliefs, leading us to become bitter and empty as we engage in futile attempts to change how other people think, and all the while neglecting to love God and our neighbours on a daily basis. This is a real danger that exists for any of us, regardless of what 'side' we might find ourselves on in relation to any particular issue.

The social and political issues of our world can also be so polarizing and complex that we can become uncertain and even paralyzed by fear. "What if I say or do the wrong thing? What if I get criticized for sharing my views on a particular issue?" Sometimes it can be very difficult to discern what it means to be a loving Christ-follower, so we opt for the easy way out and hide or do nothing. Yet the voice of Jesus, if we are listening, says to us over and over again, "Do not be afraid, I am with you." And if Jesus is with us, we can trust that he will show us the way — His way. If we pray and listen, I believe we will find that Jesus guides with a wise and steady hand. Father, Son and Holy Spirit have the power to lead us, so

we would do well to trust them and to participate with them in prayerfully, thoughtfully, and lovingly addressing the difficult situations and issues our world faces, as individuals and as the Church. I would also venture to say that Jesus' way is probably not the way we might have chosen, or even thought of, to begin with. Indeed, when we rely on our own abilities, we are prone to proceed in ways that put others down and elevate ourselves. In the kingdom of heaven, we are called to live in exactly the opposite way. We are called to love, and put others' interests and needs first.

All of that said, my main point is this: Without a sure and growing knowledge of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who we are in relationship to God, living lives of love that honor God and that seek God's justice and mercy for the marginalized becomes difficult, if not impossible. Without Jesus as our founda-

tion, we can be so easily swayed by the world's whims, or we can find ourselves worshipping ideologies and beliefs instead of the person of Jesus Christ. Or we might find ourselves cowering in corners, too fearful and motivated by self-preservation rather than trust in the one who has already conquered sin and death.

So what can we do? Well, I think there are some practical things that may help. First, I think we would do well to listen and pray to God. When we pray, we can ask Him for his love to fill us and to overflow as we love others. We can also ask Him to show and convict us when we start to follow wherever the culture leads, or if we are becoming stubborn, callous, or afraid. Regular Bible study and reading, as well as worship and participating in the sacraments, also are wonderful ways in which we can be reminded of who God is and who he has called us to be. And in the midst of all this, in the tension of the now and the not yet, we can rest and experience God's grace for the journey. We can rest knowing that God is God and we are not. We can be at peace knowing that Jesus is already the victorious King.



Continued on Page 8

Love is the answer

Pure love recognizes human frailty and brings us closer to God

By Ian Shaw

RF Board Chairperson

Once, after a night of debauchery in my early thirties [at that time in my life debauchery meant staying up to the wee hours playing ‘Hearts’ – the card game, not the relationship pastime], I woke hearing the strains of Slow Train Coming. Our host had it hot off the press [it was a LP album after all] and was playing it full blast on the turntable. As my fellow debauchees and I listened over brunch, we wondered – “Could it be? Has Dylan become a Christian?”

Irrespective of the correct answer to that query, Robert Zimmerman, a.k.a. Bob Dylan, produced three albums deeply rooted in Christian theology in the late 1970s/80s. For a reformed person like me, one of his best poetic images captures the essence of Original Sin – “Born already ruined, Stone-cold dead, As I stepped out of the womb” [From the title song Saved – gospel rock at its best.]

One of the lasting metaphors from this body of Christian-themed music comes from the final album in the trilogy. The song is titled, Watered Down Love. For me the imagery, more than the actual words of the song, reverberates and the accusing echo that haunts it continues to describe so much of recent life in our Canadian culture and our faith community.

Some wag once commented that almost 90-plus per cent of “correct” answers to any question in a children’s story is either Jesus or love [often both]. Love certainly is the implied bottom line for almost any challenge, debate or issue that crosses our path in society or in our denomination. And of course, in the church love is THE BOTTOM LINE. Jesus’ answer(s) to the lawyer’s question about the greatest commandment underscores love’s primary status. As does John’s presentation in chapter 4 of his first epistle.

Yet it seems when love is being advocated among us, Dylan’s accusation – “You don’t want a love that’s pure . . . You want a watered-down love” is often accurate. Love is the costliest, most challenging, most self-denying of all qualities held dear by the human heart. Read 1 Corinthians 13, 1 John 4:7ff and of course John 3:16 again if you aren’t convinced.

However, what so often is spoken of or advocated as love is some sort of Kiwanian Conviviality [thanks Dr. Walters] rooted in a non-social distancing experience of linking arms around a campfire

singing Happy Wanderer as the sun sets. After months of COVID-19, who could not want such an engagement? But that’s at best affection, not love.

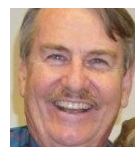
Love recognizes and opposes our universal tendency to egocentricity, hubris, self-assertion, clannishness and other destructive urges. Love asserts there is a

way that can seem right [attractive, harmless, politically correct, affirming] but its end is destruction [doesn’t lead a person into a closer connection with her Creator].

Love intends for you and me to experience life in fullness

and freedom. Pure love, therefore, seeks both to know and to follow God’s revealed truth as much as one is able. Anything less is embracing love that is watered down [weak, unsatisfying and enervating]. The best answer to almost all questions and issues is love, pure love. Such love is and has always been under threat and is a challenge to discern or as Dylan sang, “Love that’s pure ain’t no accident.” It demands effort and spiritual discernment. Your commitment will cover the former, your prayers are needed for the latter.

“
Pure love . . .
has always
been under threat and
is a challenge to discern. . . .”



Renewal Fellowship: behind the scenes

The work of renewal is evident for all to see and digest on our website: renewal-fellowship.ca. Equally important is what goes on outside the public eyes. The board of directors (see page 8 for a list of members) meets 4-5 times a year and the executive puts its heads together about a half dozen occasions — all online these days — to prayerfully discuss and discern our mission in an ever-changing church.

Here’s a glimpse of what RF’s staff and directors have been up to in recent months:

- Participation with others in the PCC in an online prayer gathering which takes place every two weeks. It’s organized by friends in orthodoxy as a six-month prayer initiative in an effort to discern the Holy Spirit’s direction in light of proposals/remits to change the definition of marriage.
- Organizing the Zoom event

“Presbyterians in Orthodoxy working together” on June 19 in an effort to share initiatives around responses and strategies to Remits ‘B’ and ‘C’ and other similar matters in our denomination, to share initiatives and look for potential cooperation, coordination and communication.

- Ongoing conversations with Presbyterians Standing for Apostolic Love and Truth (PSALT) and fledgling movements who took part in the June 19 event.
- Ongoing efforts to encourage ministers and congregations by phone and correspondence with the message, “you are not alone.”
- Prayer Calendar co-ordinator Linda Shaw, webmaster Robin Ross and administrative assistant Kyoungsoo Hwang quietly but diligently keep the organization running.

Board report

- Planning new content for the website with a focus on our Renewal Tools section, as part of our mission to point the PCC to “authentic Biblical thinking.”

NOTE: COVID-19 pandemic precautions have kept many of us literally grounded since March. “It’s a date!” is no longer in Andy Cornell’s vocabulary. Like his predecessors, speaking engagements and road trips were at the core of the executive director’s job. It may be several months or even years before he’s able to bring the Renewal message to congregations and groups. As we navigate the COVID-19 waters, we are prayerfully discerning how we can be a voice for orthodoxy and encourage those who believe in an unchanging God. Please get in touch with us via renewalfellowshipccc@gmail.com.

Where are all the disciples?

Continued from Page 1

Amen to that.

It's led by Dana Allin and is based on his 2018 book "Simple discipleship: Grow your faith, transform your community."

The title says it all. It was a quick read, but hardly superficial. The essential points are nothing new, but they're presented in a way that shouts, "Wake up!"

So I signed up.

Even before the COVID-19 shock, I was convinced that most churches were dead or dying. The most glaring evidence is not the steady decline in attendance. Rather, it's the lack of faith held by its members. And not just in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Many years ago my wife and I were invited to a small group at a local Baptist church. It was conservative and evangelical. We were used to mainline, specifically Anglican and Presbyterian, so I was kind of nervous. I had flashbacks of the brief period in my childhood when the next door neighbour, a Baptist pastor, managed to convince my parents to bring us to his church, where all I remember was people talking about their faith. All the time. They were a devout and God-fearing lot, quite unlike the Anglican crowd I was used to, where church talk stopped at the door of the sanctuary and no one said grace before eating. The Baptists took their faith seriously — they walked it and talked it.

So I expected the same at this Baptist gathering. In the weeks before the first meeting, I brushed up on Biblical knowledge and prayed that I, a spiritual infant at the time, would be able to engage in conversation with a devout believer.

My worries were unfounded. No one talked about Jesus. Or God. No one quoted scripture or the pastor's sermon last week or talked about the clash between Biblical and secular world views. Nothing suggested that these folks were any different than anyone else. It was a huge shock. And not a one-off. We became regulars in this group and the only times we talked faith was when we had to — when a particular gathering was an actual Bible study.

Coffee conversation in our churches are rarely about faith. As one PCC colleague quipped recently, "No one talks about their spiritual health. It's all about the building and finances."

Yep. So true.

In my heart, I know that true believers should be on fire all the time. We should be filled with joy, eager to share the faith

and talk shop with our brothers and sisters for the simple reason that that we are hungry and thirsty for it. Sadly, "shop" is literally that — the building and not the heart and head. Sometime, somewhere and somehow, the modern church stopped making discipleship a priority.

I had an opportunity to ask the author about this.

Q In your opinion is the lack of discipleship a growing problem?

A Yes. And I think we are more attuned to it now. In the mid to late 1900s I think much of our faith was a civic faith because in our Christen-

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I think we as Christians are awake to the anemic faith. . . . we are more awake to the discipleship problem that has been present.

— Dana Allin

dom culture being a part of the church was normative. In America that has been lost (except perhaps in the south) I think in Canada it happened earlier. So discipleship previously really was just gaining knowledge and people went to Sunday School or in later years small groups and gained knowledge, they were good moral people as both Christianity and the culture expected.

Now I think we as Christians are awake to the anemic faith. I think pastors have seen the gap between traditional discipleship classes and people actually being transformed in the image of Christ. So we are more awake to the discipleship problem that has been present.

But I do think it is a bigger problem now than in the past. At least in America in the 1980s we had the Christian Growth Movement. The premise was to create an attractive church that will meet peoples' needs and they will come. So large churches that had incredible worship and children's ministry areas that looked like Disneyland. And it "worked" — a lot of

people left denominational churches or boomers came back to church because this church was meeting their needs. However, I think the unintended consequence was that they propagated consumerism. So church became all about meeting peoples' needs and making them feel comfortable. Dare I say that while Jesus met needs he didn't pander to making people comfortable. So some large churches get frustrated when people leave for other churches that have better programs and they wonder where their commitment is. But my point is, "You brought them in through a consumerist mindset, don't be surprised when they leave because the church down the street meets their consumeristic needs better."

(I do think there have been huge blessings and it is easy to go after and criticize the large church. That isn't my intention but I do think it has added to the challenge of discipleship.)

I think COVID is also revealing the challenge as well. People who were church attenders are no longer church attenders (and I think probably 35 per cent in the US won't come back.) Because you can't be a church attender in this season, if you are a disciple then you don't have to attend formal church in order to be a disciple.

We do a lot with the church in Iran (my book is translated into Farsi) and to watch their understanding of discipleship is awesome and it is so non-Western. In the midst of COVID they are still growing in quantity and quality of disciples.

Q Is this inability and unwillingness to be disciples just part of our fallen human condition?

A Yes. I do think that part of our fallen nature keeps us from being a disciple. We are (and I still believe) totally depraved and that affects every aspect of our life including resisting the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And I do believe the enemy uses this, as he did in the fall, to distract us. I am not a "demon under every doorstep" kind of person, but I do think the enemy will distract us from our core calling as disciples. He would love nothing more, as C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* reminds us, than to render us ineffective in faith and just going through the motions of Christianity.

For more information:
eco-pres.org
flourishmovement.org

PROFILE: Cheyne Presbyterian Church

By Bill Harrison & Kristy Hamilton
Members of Cheyne Session

We are an intergenerational community of believers seeking after the transformative power of Christ to live out the purpose and plan of His calling on our life.

Since 1844 the congregation of Cheyne has been serving its community on the outskirts of Hamilton, Ontario. In 1960 the current building was opened in the centre of downtown Stoney Creek, but with congregational growth continuing, the building was expanded in the 1980s, along with an increase in paid staff.

THEN, AND NOW. These three words capture the essence of life since COVID-19 hit. We are now just beginning to navigate our way through this new normal to establish means of continuing to build God's kingdom in the midst of new restrictions and opportunities. As such, leadership then is essential in this endeavour. Using Cheyne's Vision as a template, here are some observations and questions that have been useful in shaping our culture at Cheyne.

Leadership is key in any congregation in exercising the giftedness and passion each member and adherent brings to our communities of faith, for the working out of the Great Commission in all of our lives as devoted followers of Christ. ***In worship, is wholeheartedly loving the God who loves us*** leading us to servant leadership? Who has the Lord brought to Cheyne to work out His purposes at a time such as this? Let me introduce some. Today, Cheyne is led by seven paid staff in primary roles. Rev. Steve Lindsay is Lead Pastor since 1997 and has a passion for seeing people come to Christ and grow in a vibrant relationship with Him through Life groups. Significantly, Steve prepares daily devotions the year round, in hard copy and online, to help us work out God's purposes in our lives and communities. Robin Burley, raised in Cheyne, is our Children and Youth Pastor who spent 11 years in the Maritimes serving in a similar role. Marc Johnson, likewise raised in Cheyne, is our Family and Young Adult Pastor. Joshua Gardner, Worship Leader for our contemporary service, has rich experience as a youth pastor and worship minister that enables him to passionately craft a worship experience, both in person and online. Lynda Smith is Worship Leader for our traditional service for the past 10 years and

leads our sanctuary choir. Philip Lee, Organist, was hired in 1969 while a teenager. For many years he has played the organ/piano each Sunday morning at three neighbouring churches (first Anglican, then United, then Presbyterian). Rod Harron is our current Church Administrator, coming to Cheyne in 1998 with an extensive IT background that is particularly helpful with our transition to an online presence. All roles of paid staff are changing in light of the COVID challenges, with an increasing emphasis on the demands of social media and website issues. We are discovering some amazing and helpful online resources.

Relationship is foundational to an authentic Christian community of faith. First of all, relationship with our gracious triune God of grace: *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have*



Cheyne's Vision

To lead people to grow as devoted followers of Christ who live out God's 5 W-I-F-E-S purposes:

Worship – Wholeheartedly loving the God who loves us.

Instruction For Discipleship – Loving God by obeying God.

Fellowship – Loving God by loving God's family.

Evangelism – Loving God by introducing others to Christ.

Service – Loving God by serving God and people.

Cheyne's Mission

A Christ-centred church family building Christ-centred families.

sent. John 17:3. The importance of a personal relationship with our living God and ***loving God by introducing others to Christ, evangelism***, was emphasized in the 1970s and 80s through many scores of home visitations at Cheyne with the Evangelism Explosion program, keying in on the questions "If you were to die tonight, do you have confidence that you would go

to heaven, and if so, why would God invite you in?" Many, many lives were transformed by this building of relationships and the sharing of the gospel, all done with earnest and expectant prayer. ***Loving God by obeying and responding to God, instruction for discipleship*** is experienced as we face these and similar crucial questions of life and death in the context of Scripture. Thus, our support of an online Alpha program which began on Sundays and Tuesdays in September.

The leadership focus on instruction for discipleship led to the expansion of life groups, eventually to include more than half of the congregation. Further, the role of small groups in discipleship and fellowship and pastoral care highlights the second area of relational importance – ***loving God by loving God's family, fellowship***. Life groups are now starting up either online, in person at homes and at the church, or as a hybrid. Online *Divorce Care* is offered on Mondays. Prayer is crucial in fellowship. Prayer Cheyne — by phone and email — connects prayer warriors with confidential prayer requests of need and praise. Each week Pastor Steve hosts a Zoom prayer meeting. Besides offering online support for youth, adults and young families on YouTube and Zoom weekly, we are initiating worship service DVD delivery to those unable to access the internet.

Loving God by serving God and people, service, is exemplified in our support of Living Rock (at risk youth), Micah House (safe home for asylum seekers), Men's Street Ministry (food provision along with preaching), and benevolence to families in poverty. We also support PWS&D and equally, a Cheyne Missions fund. Many have entered Christian ministry in response to the Holy Spirit's call. Currently, three members are supported in ministry: Julie Burley, a missionary teacher at a Christian school in Lima, Peru; and Jessica Lindsay and Cathy Horvath at Galcom International in Hamilton which produces radios and installs gospel radio stations across the world.

Giving thanks to the King and Head of the Church who alone makes all of this possible.

For more information:

www.cheynechurch.com

www.facebook.com/cheynechurch

www.youtube.com/user/cheynechurch

Unmasking the essential issue

We're more likely to submit to the state than to God

By **Andy Cornell**
Executive director

I don't like wearing a mask.

I don't like the fog produced on eye-glass lenses. Fiddling with elastic straps is a pain. I hate how the straps sometimes get into a battle with my precious (and pricey) hearing devices, causing them to come loose. I don't need yet another impediment to the effective enunciation of words, making verbal communication even more difficult.

That's just the physical.

Socially, I don't like not recognizing other people. (Although I admit on some days it's sometimes nice *not* to be recognized by others.)

Logically, I'm bothered that some people actually think they're protecting themselves when in fact you're only protecting others in the extremely unlikely possibility you have COVID-19 and are pre- or un-symptomatic.

With the exception of Hallowe'en and costume parties, does anyone actually like wearing a mask? Even if you are among the tiny minority who don't mind, how many of us like being TOLD to wear one?

I remember when mandatory seatbelt use came in Ontario back in 1976. I was only 13 at the time and in a fit of adolescent libertarian rebellion I vowed not to comply. But I had no choice – if I wanted dad to put the car in drive, I had to buckle up. I got over it pretty quick and now feel naked without one.

Most of us don't like to be told what to do. Especially by the government. But we are reminded in the first verse of Romans 13: "Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God."

The most-powerful image of submission to worldly authority is the willingness of our Lord to be arrested, tried and convicted. When Pilate asked Jesus don't you know I have the power to release you?" Jesus replied, "You wouldn't have that power unless it was given to you by God."

So most of us wear the darn things. I may see mandatory masks as a violation of my liberty, but I go along with it.

For the most part, we do a pretty good job of submission to human authority. It's relatively easy to follow the laws of the land, because they're spelled out and pret-

ty clear. It's a black and white situation.

And then there's God.


The greatest authority also has a set of statutes and regulations. It's called The Bible. An added bonus is that this canon of authority includes (at no extra charge) a rich judicial commentary from the law-makers (our triune God) and arbiter (Jesus.) The Holy Spirit, as the enforcer, flows through the Old and the New testaments and weaves them together. No need for laws to be tested and precedents set, or appeals to high courts. It's all there.

And yet, we don't comply.

I'm not talking about the great heathen world outside the confines of our tidy

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We don't know or accept the authentic interpretation of scripture because we are not willing to be fully submitted to the author – God.



churches and perfect homes. No, I'm looking at our collective mirror.

The church does not follow its own Creator. That may sound illogical. But how else to describe the way many churches have abandoned orthodoxy. Too many of us follow what we like, reinterpret what we don't like and ignore what's unpalatable.

Take John 10:10, "My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." To some, it means that we find joy by acting upon our human desires, which were gifts from God so let's use them – fully and freely. To others, it means we find joy from a devoted and abiding walk with Christ, who gives us Spiritual peace.

So which is it? Can it be both?

While many — in an effort to be accommodating, perhaps — may accept both views as worthy, this dualistic view is idolatrous. In my view, orthodoxy strives to view scripture through the eyes of Christ and a posture of complete submission to the Father. Our Lord's ministry on

earth is all I need in order to know that true joy is found in the Spirit not the flesh. Life is not about us – it's about God. My body does not belong to me – it belongs to God. This is among the central underlying currents which flow from Genesis to Revelation.

We don't know or accept the authentic interpretation of scripture because we are not willing to be fully submitted to the author – God. Please read that last sentence again, slowly and carefully.

Too many people in the church are focused more on soothing themselves and tending to the human condition than they are on pleasing the Creator.

Submission to authority means that we turn over our rights and freedoms. This lack of submission is at the root of church decline. This is actually proven. Believers and congregations who are focused on their submission to God's holy and perfect wisdom and adhere to a traditional interpretation of scripture, are for the most part, thriving. Just look at the Third World.

On the other hand, believers and congregations which are focused almost exclusively on social justice and give lip service to Bible study, dedicated prayer, seeking the person and work of the Holy Spirit in order to practice the Great Commission to go into the world primarily to make disciples – believers and congregations who do not take those things seriously are for the most part, dying.

Of course, we all know what happens when we point the finger. There are three fingers pointed right back at us. I'm looking right in the mirror when I say these things.

Yes, I have work to do. I know it takes discipline to remain focused on the Lord. It's not easy. We live in a dark world full of temptation. The Calvinist in me says I am totally depraved. I need the Lord to do what I can't do.

If we want to break free from the enemy, we need to make dedicated efforts to follow the Lord more closely. It takes faith and discipline. In the same way we are willing to give up our freedoms to all three levels of government – which is not easy, it's not comfortable.

If we are more willing and able to submit to state authority than to Godly authority, who or what do we really serve?

A financial update

By Stan Cox

Renewal Fellowship treasurer

A huge percentage of our income is from the generous giving of our members and friends. Compared to the period from Jan. 1 to July 31, 2019, our regular income up to the end of July 2020 is about \$10,000 lower.

The Federal Government responded to COVID-19's economic impact with a number of initiatives. Our board executive agreed that I should apply for the two for which we as a charitable organization are eligible: the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Canada Emergency Business Account.

As a result, over-and-above our regular income, we now receive help with 75 per cent of our wage expenses, to the tune of \$3,400 monthly from CEWS, totaling \$14,850 thus far in 2020. A new application has to be submitted each month. From CEBA we deposited this month \$40,000 CEBA's a one-time Federally sponsored interest-free loan through CIBC until Dec. 31, 2022. If we repay \$30,000 on or before that date, the balance of \$10,000 is forgiven, and is ours to keep as a one-time grant.

This financial help from the Federal Government is temporary. And we receive it as from God's gracious hand. At the same time, the Renewal Fellowship still counts on the faithful stewardship of God's people for their regular generous gifts.

SUPPORT RENEWAL:

- ◇ Consider adding us to the congregation's annual missions budget.
- ◇ Encourage one other person to become a member of the Fellowship.
- ◇ Make donations through the PAR plan on our website. Or make a one-time or occasional donation by credit card or by cheque.

Wineskins

Continued from Page 2

God intends us to be Light in the darkness. That requires us personally and collectively to abandon our self-righteous bents and face our own spiritual/theological bankruptcy. Seek "the Great Pearl" of far greater value than any denomination, including the PCC. That's how we can

move on — to become effective agents of renewal rather than ineffective reactionaries of polarized issues.

Here's the question: How do we want to be remembered tomorrow by the lost prodigals of today? And is that why we talk more about institutional issues than represents all those who had never experienced the "New Wineskin".

This was the son who had gone the way of worldliness and apostasy.



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Members normally serve for two terms of three years each (six years total) but this is often extended. Board members are elected at the spring annual general meeting. The board meets at least three times a year.

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Question of identity

Continued from Page 3

The complex, and often divisive, questions and issues of our day deserve our attention and action. I do not presume to have all the answers or solutions to these concerns although, like most, I do have thoughts and opinions about them. However, the purpose of this essay is not to get into those details, but rather to suggest that we must remain rooted in Jesus Christ to avoid becoming overly focused on our own way, or confused and uncertain about what to do next. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the most capable to lead us to the light when we find ourselves confronted with darkness.

Jesus, we pray that you would grant us humility, courage and wisdom as we seek to follow you each day. Help us to remember who you are and that we are found in you. Amen.

RF's mission

To lead each other and The Presbyterian Church in Canada to authentic Biblical thinking, powerful Spirit-led prayer, and effective Gospel witness.