

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 speak to congregations and groups weekdays or on Sundays.

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The Renewal News is a quarterly publication of Renewal Fellowship.

We welcome your stories

GA 2019: a way forward?

By Rev. Andy Cornell
Executive Director

The PCC is facing a historic decision. In an effort to find a solution to decades of disagreement over the response to same-sex attraction, the denomination's 45 presbyteries are being asked to approve parallel definitions of marriage.

Each presbytery will be asked to say yes or no to the remits. If at least 23 presbyteries vote in favour and the aggregate number of members of those 23 courts represent at least half of the total number of presbyters in the denomination, then the matter goes to the 2020 General Assembly for approval.

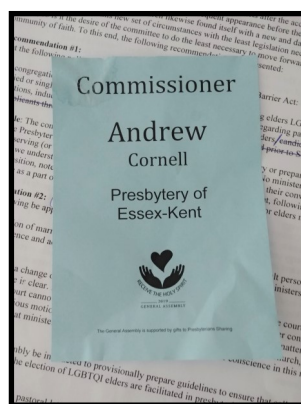
So how did we get to this place?

GA 2018: Commissioners were asked by the Committee on Church Doctrine to uphold the traditional definition of marriage. Before the debate could begin, commissioners approved a motion to appoint a special committee consisting of the previous 15 moderators of GA to "propose a way ahead that allows the mission and ministry of the PCC to continue.

May 21: The special committee's report was released two weeks prior to GA. It recommended four possible pathways: current practice (A), inclusion (B), a reorganization into three streams (C), and no change in doctrine but allowing freedom to conduct same-sex marriage (D).

June 4: On the Tuesday of GA, commissioners moved into committee of the whole in order to allow freer discussion. The report was presented, questions asked, discussion and debate shared and the four pathways ranked by secret ballot. Commissioners chose 'B', which would have required all new clergy to adhere to the new doctrine but allow liberty of conscience and action for clergy already ordained. Assembly was reconvened in order to formally endorse the choice. An amendment to replace 'B' with 'C' failed with 87 commissioners in favour and 129 against. In the end, 'B' was accepted by a vote of 126-91. A special implications committee was struck to produce the exact working of the recommendations (remits) to go to presbyteries.

See ASSEMBLY Page 2



The trouble with norms

By Ian Shaw
Renewal Fellowship Chairperson.

For many decades I have been a Bruce Cockburn fan. While my take on the dynamics involved in being a faithful follower of Jesus aren't always in sync with his, the elements of faith that permeate his music often inspire my spirit and even when I don't fully agree with his analysis of the world, his perceptions force me to pause and reflect – and sometimes even adjust. (Yes, I can change!).

Over 35 years ago, one of his song titles resonated powerfully the first time I heard it. From the song's content, I doubt if Bruce meant it as a comment on the Fall and its ongoing effects, but that was one of the implications I drew from it. The piece implies that there is a downward spiral and 'evils' barely imaginable today will become acceptable and common mere decades into the future. The theme of the song? *'The trouble with normal, it always gets worse'.*

See TROUBLE page 2

RF board to respond to remits

The outcome of General Assembly wasn't what we wanted, as it's a departure from authentic Biblical thinking.

It leaves us with much to ponder. We will respond only when we know we've heard clearly from the Holy Spirit.

The Renewal board executive met online the day after GA to debrief and talk about our next steps. We will be working with the entire board and will consult with friends on the traditional side of the denomination.

We encourage all our members and other interested persons to review the draft remits, to speak with those who were commissioners and/or to watch the proceedings online through the links at Presbyterian.ca

Our plan is to propose direction to our members following our annual face-to-face board gathering July 16-17. Stay tuned by checking our website (renewal-fellowship.ca) or our Facebook page.

Stage set for Barrier battle

General Assembly adopted unprecedented recommendations to change the definition of marriage and to allow LGBTQI ministers and elders to be called or elected to office.

As it would change doctrine, the recommendations will be submitted as remits for consideration under the Barrier Act.

Approval of those remits is required by at least half of the PCC's 45 presbyteries (50 per cent plus one equals 23 presbyteries) which represent at least half of the combined total of the constituent members of presbyteries. It's a double majority.

Here's an example. Assume there are 1,000 members of presbytery across the PCC (some presbyteries may have only 10, others could have 50.) Let's say 24 presbyteries approve, but when you add up the total members of those approving presbyteries, there's only 485. It

fails. You could have a large number of smaller presbyteries which approve, but their combined total of presbyters may be a fraction of the total. Or let's say most of the larger presbyteries approve and the combined totals add up to 600, but most of the small presbyteries say no. It also fails.

If the double majority is not reached, the matter dies.

If the double majority is reached at the presbytery level, then it goes to General Assembly 2020 for final approval.

The 2020 Assembly may approve it and it immediately becomes law. Assembly may reject it and send it back to presbyteries for reconsideration. Commissioners could also take no further action, or they could send an amended or totally new proposal back to the presbyteries.

Assembly

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June 5: Assembly was jolted by the news that a total of 11 commissioners representing both Han Ca (Korean-speaking) presbyteries asked for permission to withdraw from the assembly. After an emotional discussion, commissioners voted to accept "with regret" their requests to leave and extended an invitation for them to return. Most of the commissioners returned for the evening sederunt. The moderator invited a special time of discussion, allowing commissioners 90 seconds each to share their thoughts with the court. The implications committee then delivered its report, surprising

many by recommending that liberty of conscience and action only extend until Sept. 1, 2022. Several groups of commissioners (liberal and traditional-minded) immediately began drafting amendments to tone down or remove the deadline.

June 6: An amendment written by a group of young ministers representing a range of theological perspectives proposed two parallel definitions. It was designed to avoid what could have resulted in a significant exodus of ministers, elders and congregations who could not affirm the new doctrine. The compromise was not well received by many affirmers or by some traditionalists, but enough commissioners agreed.

Trouble

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For the moment, set aside the uncontested pessimism of the title and the numerous counter examples of good advancements. Just check many of the current norms embraced wholeheartedly by our culture that scant decades ago were unthinkable in society. And as you do, remember Orwell's introduction of doublethink as a method for presenting darkness as light. Then ask, 'Are we victims of brainwashing and propaganda or are we seeing truth more clearly than we used to?'

Recent upheavals in The PCC have frequently brought Cockburn's theme to mind. The 2015 overtures seeking changes related to same gender matters used five letters LGBTQ, though most initial focus was around L and G. Now 'I' is usually added to the acronym (LGBTQI), though at times there have been other letters. And an initiative that seemed to be relatively straightforward in its intent, now has four pages of vocabulary definitions and descriptions in this year's Book of Reports (pp.313-316). And ideas most of us never considered five years ago (e.g. 'The Trans Umbrella' and 'heterosexism') are full partners in the discussion. In addition, the original **call for inclusion around marriage** has expanded - 'These stories are at

the heart of the mandate of Rainbow Communion and the call of The Presbyterian Church in Canada to repent of its homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism and hypocrisy'. More complicated doesn't necessarily mean worse, but one wonders what other pieces may be coming?

As I noted earlier, I don't embrace unreservedly all of Cockburn's analyses, but I do believe he does proclaim an unpleasant truth. The forces of harm released by disobedience are relentless. Therefore, it is essential God's people endeavour to maintain the standards God has established for faithful discipleship and not get trapped by what culture holds as currently acceptable. In the Fellowship we call that authentic Biblical thinking.

Renewal for the next generation

Millennials and the church today

By Lauren & Jillian McWhinnie

Why aren't millennials going to church? Where are all of the young adults? How is the church going to survive in the coming years with a missing generation? Many have tackled these questions, including pastors, sociologists, and research study groups. Some argue that millennials view the church as hypocritical and irrelevant. Others suggest that the church lacks a sense of community and does not allow space for doubt, questions or growth. Certainly there are elements of truth to some of these arguments, and they deserve the church's attention.

In this article we will offer a few of our own thoughts, as millennials ourselves, as we wrestle with the following two questions: 1) Why aren't millennials going to church? 2) What can the church be doing to reach millennials?

Why Aren't Millennials Going to Church? Discerning Truth in a Pluralistic Society & Unfamiliarity with Christianity

Today's young adults are confronted with a myriad of voices and opinions. Like many human beings seeking meaning and purpose, young people are left with the questions: Who do we follow? What belief system should we adhere to? For many young adults, these are difficult questions to answer.

Many choose to believe in a little bit of everything. I can recall a conversation about faith in high school during which belief in aspects of each world religion was advocated as the safest way to ensure access to whatever afterlife lay beyond. In contrast, many resort to agnosticism or atheism because navigating various religions and denominations seems overwhelming and complicated. Sometimes it seems easier to explain that the letters of "presbyterian" can be rearranged to spell "Britney Spears" than it is to explain the historical and theological significance of being a Presbyterian to our non-Christian friends and acquaintances!

In a world where "truth" is increasingly defined through individual experience, young people have become skeptical of so-called organized religion. A truth that goes beyond individual experience, brings people together in community, directs the ebb and flow of our universe, and sets us free to live as beloved children, is a foreign concept for many of our peers.

"It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out." *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis.

Despite being written over 50 years ago, these words of the demon Uncle Screwtape to his protégé Wormwood ring eerily true today. The church can seem foreign to many young adults, especially if they did not attend as children or teenagers, or did not have parents or other adults in their lives who acted as spiritual teachers or mentors. What is the point of church? Who is Jesus? What is worship, prayer, communion and baptism? What is the Bible all about and what does it mean? Navigating the language, traditions and texts of the church can be incredibly daunting and overwhelming. Without guidance and clear explanations, it's easy to see how giving up on the church is a viable option for some young adults, especially when there are so many other demands on their time. Unfortunately, the end result of this is a generation that is distanced from the church, and unfamiliar with the true meaning of the gospel.

What can the church be doing to reach millennials?

1) Clear Biblical Teaching.

This first point might seem obvious, yet this does not diminish its importance. The gospel of Jesus Christ is attested to in

the authoritative and inspired words of Scripture, and it is this gospel that the church proclaims to the world. Many millennials are longing for direction and purpose in the midst of confusion and uncertainty. Thus preaching that is sound, clear, and rooted in the Scriptural witness is essential. Taking this a step further, it is also important that the church clearly teaches individuals how to read, study, and meditate upon Scripture themselves.

When completing our undergraduate studies, we both were members of Erindale Christian Fellowship — an InterVar-

sity campus ministry group. We attended a small-group Bible study and were introduced to the method of inductive manuscript study. We read the Scripture passages and were encouraged to highlight, make notes, circle strange words and jot down questions. Scripture came

alive for us as we attended that group. It became exciting to read Scripture together, to discover what riches could be found, and to deepen relationships with each other (in fact, many of us who were part of the fellowship together still meet for a weekly Bible study). We see the potential for our peers to come, question, wrestle, discover and grow in relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit through study of His word that is guided by church leaders, using methods that are engaging and invite the participation of those who come.

2) Genuine and Meaningful Worship.

"The leaders of the future will be those who dare to claim their irrelevance in the contemporary world as a divine vocation that allows them to enter into a deep solidarity with the anguish underlying all the glitter of success, and to bring the light of Jesus there." *In the Name of Jesus*, Henri Nouwen.

A truth that goes beyond individual experience, brings people together in community, directs the ebb and flow of our universe, and sets us free to live as beloved children, is a foreign concept for many of our peers.

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Renewal for the next generation

Millennials and the church today

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Many churches are looking to engage the millennial generation with up-beat worship, multi-coloured lights, videos interspersed throughout the service and an eye-catching Instagram account. These tactics may work initially, but many millennials are looking for more than the “glitter of success,” as Nouwen puts it. The Church does not need to become more “glittery” to attract young people. Our generation already lives in a world that promotes the loud and “glittery.” The Church does not need to become “relevant” for young people. The allure of the gospel is its “irrelevance in the contemporary world,” as Nouwen puts it. The counter-cultural messages of Jesus are powerful and sufficient.

It is difficult to make generalizations for a specific age group without ignoring individual preferences for worship and teaching styles; however, from our own experiences, and the experiences of our peers, Christian millennials will respond well to worship services that are genuine and are firmly rooted in Biblical truths. For example, a full worship band is not needed every Sunday to ensure that young people are entering the church doors. A simple musical arrangement between a pianist and vocalist can be an effective way to lead God’s people in song. In addition, meaningful and reflective song lyrics are valued by young people, and yes, these lyrics can be found in hymns!

3) Personal Connection: An Invitation to Community & Discipleship.

Technology has had a negative effect on the quality of face-to-face connections that young people experience with each other and other generations. Whether it is at a bus stop or in a restaurant, it seems that our screens are more interesting than the people in our physical surroundings. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly evident that over-indulging in screen time and browsing social media can also have negative impacts on mental health.

What a wonderful opportunity for the Church to promote face-to-face interactions in our world! Not only can we invite others into our Church community on Sunday mornings, but small groups and community meals are excellent ways of inviting young adults into a community. Countless times throughout Scripture, we find Jesus enjoying fellowship with people, including his disciples, Pharisees, tax collectors, Mary, and Martha, during meals. Although we are not privy to all of the conversations Jesus had during mealtimes, no doubt there were times of teaching and speaking the truth to those he was with.

During our university years, we would frequently meet up with our campus minister at Starbucks. Not long after graduating, we discovered that our campus minister actually budgeted for these Starbucks meetings with students throughout the

year, as much of his ministry involved sitting with us, praying with us, and paying for our Starbucks orders. He was “Jesus” to us and so many of our friends during our exciting, confusing and stressful university days, and his way of ministering to us, just as Jesus demonstrates, was so meaningful, yet so simple. For a generation that is starving for personal connection, perhaps a simple invitation and a listening ear is all that is needed to plant the seed of faith.

Although the church is going through challenging times, we both are looking to the future with hope. There are great opportunities for the church to invite the young adults in their communities to new life in Jesus, and also to be participants and leaders of the church. Perhaps the first step is to listen — listen to the needs of those young adults in the community, listen to their struggles and joys, listen as they share what it is that they are seeking, and continually pray that renewal will be brought about in His church.

Jillian and Lauren McWhinnie are supporters of Renewal Fellowship. Jillian is also a member of Renewal’s board of directors.

Our generation already lives in a world that promotes the loud and “glittery.” The Church does not need to become “relevant” for young people.

RF’s Knox College bursary revived

Renewal Fellowship has renewed its Knox College scholarship.

After several years of dormancy, it was awarded this spring to second-year M.Div student Edward Woo, who did his field education placement with Rev. Jeff Loach in Nobleton, Ont.

The Renewal Fellowship Evangelism Scholarship (formerly the Living the Name Scholarship) has been increased from \$100 to \$250. It’s funded by a bequest to the college from Re-

newal supporters in 2010. It’s awarded to “a basic-degree student with a demonstrated passion, gift or interest in evangelism. Should there be no such candidate, it will be awarded to an advanced-degree student who is researching evangelism. Full- and part-time students are eligible.”

This is only the third time it’s been awarded. The last times were in 2010 and 2013.

Authentic Biblical thinking

This is the first of three messages to Renewal's annual meeting at Grace West Hill, Scarborough

There are many ways to tackle this subject. However, for the brief time we have I want to explore the theme examining how Jesus approached the Scriptures of his day.

First though, some thoughts about the implied verb: thinking. We often define the word as a matter of logic or a left-brained approach – researching etymologies and context, analysing, discussing even debating, seeking core truths and probable implications. Jesus employed both sides of his brain but his default approach seems more right brained [visual, feeling and intuitive], which we see clearly in his parables. This preference shaped how the left side was applied and together his use of the whole mind I believe provides a framework for an authentic approach.

Before offering perspective on this part of our vision statement, I want to comment on it from a negative angle. Early in Mark 2 and Luke 5 and slightly delayed in Matthew 9, Jesus encounters strong opposition from the religious community. That opposition increases until allied with political forces they turn Jesus over to Pilate. The two main opponent groups are the Scribes and Pharisees and Jesus singles them out in Matthew 23 – “Woe to you . . .”

1. Scribes [experts on and teachers of the law; lawyers] exemplify the struggle of talent. Able people, such as Scribes, see deeper and faster and wider than the rest of us.

It's a powerful gift, but like power itself the seed of corruption is woven into the DNA. Commonly it emerges as some expression of hubris.

Instead of the Scribes' learning being subservient to the word and the Spirit, it rises above both.

I once heard this voiced by a very talented person as “the Bible at its best.” What this incredibly able man was doing was using his mostly left-brained filters to judge the scriptures and any parts that didn't measure up to his standards were either minimized or set aside completely.

Authenticity demands our best, but our best must be offered in humble service to God and God's people.

2. Pharisees used a different left-brained filter. While the Scribes' hubris of the mind had a focus on theology, the Pharisees' hubris of the mind had a focus on ethics.

No doubt pride can take root in the right-side of our perspective, but from Gospel encounters with Jesus those from the left-side seem to be more prevalent in thinking about the scriptures.

3. There is a third filter Jesus casts in a negative light, though it is rarely as confrontational as the hubris of the mind. In fact it is almost a polar opposite.

The common crowd brought not hubris into thinking, but sloth. They bought into the prevailing truth with little reflection [John 9, Matthew 21:1-9]. Almost unfiltered superstition.

From a more positive angle, I'll make some observations on Jesus' style.

1. Jesus used what I call a big picture context filter. This is God's character of holiness and mercy, compassion and righteousness as well as God's sovereign power. Jesus starts with those overarching perceptions and goes narrow and focused. The large image of who God is and what God desires manages the specifics, whether it is inviting others to take a second look, reframing a tradition or offering a new teaching to embrace.

This approach takes specific scriptures and expands, deepens and modifies the law [see Matthew 5]. Mark 7 provides an example of Corban as the wrong way of changing law versus right way.

It corrects errors and omissions. [e.g. Luke 4:16-30 – God's people had narrowed mercy to us, judgment to them. Jesus leaves out judgment and includes gentiles. Matthew 22/Mark 12/Luke 20 – Jesus adjusts concepts around the relationship between David and God's anointed; parables of grace [e.g. sower, prodigal son] bring to the fore an understated attribute of God.

Jesus' approach introduces major new understanding [See Luke 24.] This account is a left and right brain one-two.

2. Jesus could fit into modern strands of the Jewish faith; he was reformed as well as orthodox and conservative. [See Matthew 13:51,52]. As our ordination vows affirm, God may grant us additional or new insights through the Spirit. His use of story emphasizes openness to newness and growth and affirmed wonder as an essential partner with wisdom.

Jesus reconfigured the family [Matthew 12:46-50], the whole concept of Messiah [Matthew 16:21-23, 22:41-46], the understanding of the law [Matthew 5:21-48] and especially God's grace [Matthew 8:5-13, 18:23-35; Luke 4:25-27; John 8:3-11]

3. Don't major on the minors. For example, do you not think Jesus was aware of the challenges of stories like Jonah and Daniel's fiery furnace? Doubtless we are far more accomplished technologically and scientifically than those ancients, but thinkers like Aristotle and mathematicians like Pythagoras could doubtless hold their own in today's campuses and laboratories.

Jesus didn't lose sight of the forest because the occasional tree seemed out of place. In fact, he adds to the challenge of Jonah by making the fishy part of the tale, a sign of his own death and resurrection [Matthew 12].

We should be no quicker to diminish these troublesome stories than Jesus was.

4. As Jesus placed himself in obedience under God's authority and God's word given through the law and the prophets, he was given a fuller grasp of God's will and purpose. [Matthew 5:17-20, John 14:15-26; 16:5-10.]

The apostles continued that practice as the gospel or new covenant gathered in the gentiles.

In conclusion, I share a warning: Jesus was crucified. Authentic Biblical Thinking (ABT) essentially led to Jesus' death. It is a dangerous venture. Nonetheless I would also contend that ABT begins at the cross, when you and I humbly submit our gifts to comprehend the word to the One who is the Word.

ABT begins with a prayer: “Lord if you open my eyes to see, my ears to hear and my mind to understand and give me a heart to obey then I will have words of life to speak. Grant me courage also to express what you would have me teach.



Ian Shaw

Powerful, Spirit-led prayer

This is an excerpt from the second of three messages to Renewal's annual meeting at Grace West Hill, Scarborough

We begin life with the human instinct to connect to our Creator. Children, whether they've been raised in a Christian home or not, reach out to God in their thinking. And it continues throughout our lives. Even a professing non-believer might say "O please, please, please let me find my wallet" as they're desperately searching around. Who are they talking to?

For many people the prayer journey ends there. Others are introduced to prayer at church, in popular culture or through family. It registers and they pay attention – they go beyond the instinct. That's the second group. The third group are actual believers. They may sincerely pray to God through Christ. Taking another step forward, they may pray out loud, a huge step.

I was in that third group for many years; I scripted all of my public prayers. Finally, I took the bold step to pray extemporaneously – the fancy word for prayer that is unscripted and unprepared. It's step four. It was a significant mark in my journey. And it felt great. But then I stopped the journey. I set up camp in the school of prayer in which you thought about each word, but they were still my words.

Little did I know that a fifth step lay ahead. A couple of years ago I started feeling that my public prayers were a little empty. All head, no heart. And then one day, while reading through the Bible I came across that wonderful verse from Romans 8:26, "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us." Wow. I'd read that verse 100 times before but it finally clicked. It was as if the hands of God had reached down and gave me a shake. That was it. I was praying with my head and not my heart.

So my journey resumed. I was drawn to Dunamis Project, the intensive training in the person and work of The Holy Spirit. Anyone who has ever taken part in Dunamis knows this is something missing in many of our churches. Submission to the Holy Spirit is where powerful prayer

starts.

There is plenty of scriptural inspiration as we seek to become prayer warriors. But one stands out. "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." (James 5:16b.)

Earnest? We pray from the bottom of our hearts. It's pure and motivated by altruistic submission to God's will. It seeks God's will. It's not about us. Can you picture that? Do we pray that way? Most of the time? Then there's righteous. Do we trust and obey? Do we have enough faith to live in obedience to God's holy commands? Most of us try to live by the Golden Rule. Are we virtuous and upright? Most of the time?

The sobering truth is that as earnest and righteous as we think we are, our prayers aren't going to be powerful and we aren't going to get wonderful results because something very important is lacking. Too many of us look at that one sentence without putting in context. Look back one sentence: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (James 5:16a.)

There's an element in the Presbyterian Church which downplays the presence of sin and the power of sin in our lives because to do so is a downer. So we often ignore the power of sin and how it prevents God's hands from working.

It is vitally important to identify sin, call it out and pray the blood of Jesus, which takes away the sins of the world. In the same way we recognize the power of the Holy Spirit, we also need to recognize the power of the enemy, the demonic strongholds that are found throughout our secular culture – and which creep into the church. It's an illness.

There's a line in the old hymn, "There is a balm in Gilead" — "to heal the sin-sick soul." It is to the balm of Gilead we must turn before we pray. He is the only one who can take our sins. It's why we pray in the name of Jesus, who lived with no sin, but was made to be like sin in order to pay for our transgressions.

Because we are human, we possess a certain amount of pride. We are quick to point to the sin in others and not so fast to shine the light in our own dark places.

This need to come clean is found throughout scripture, and witnessed powerfully in Psalm 19:12-13. "How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin."

Notice the word "hidden." Each one of us harbours some sin that we don't actually think is sin. There are things I do which I think are OK and in God's will but aren't. So part of repentance is asking God to show us those dark places in our lives which we might not be aware of.

Sin controls us. When we call it out, we take much of its power away.

Easy enough, right?

But wait. Read James' words again.

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

Each other! It is easier – much easier – to confess our sins to God than it is to confess them to each other, face to face. And so in true human weakness, we fail to do that. I pray for forgiveness daily in prayer, sometimes several times, depending on the day. But when was the last time we pulled someone aside and confessed? It doesn't have to be a crime or an egregious moral failure. It can be something minor. But minor things left unchecked become significant things, which left unchecked can lead to serious transgression.

Confession of sin – before God and each other – is essential if we are to achieve any sort of freedom from sin's control. The need to confess and be free from the control of sin is essential if we are to call ourselves righteous in any way and pray earnestly.

The challenge to each other and to The Presbyterian Church in Canada is as straightforward as a three-step program.

First, we confess to God and to each other and seek forgiveness. Second, we search. We humbly ask whether we have been deceived and are harbouring sin.

Only then can we present our honest prayers for God's will to be done and we can seek and allow the power of Christ's Spirit to pray for us, to provide the words. Humbly let go of our own expectations and open our minds to what God can do. This is powerful, Spirit-led prayer. It is achievable if we prepare, if we focus, if we submit. It takes work. It is a journey. And it's one that never ends.



Andy Cornell

Effective Gospel witness

This is the third of three messages to Renewal's annual meeting at Grace West Hill, Scarborough

Simon Sinek, in his book "Start with Why" argues that many people, organizations and companies know WHAT they do and some even know HOW. But, a very few know WHY. WHATs are our products or services we provide. HOWs are meant to communicate what makes us special or sets us apart from others who do something similar. WHYs are the purposes, causes or beliefs that drive us to do what we do.

Likewise, many churches and Christians know what they do and even know how they do. But, a very few ponder on why. I find that many Christians struggle with Gospel witness and evangelism, not because they do not have right tools and programs. The real issue lies in our hearts; we do not share, because we are often afraid of rejection or because there isn't strong motivation to share the Good News with others. At least that's where I was.

Start with why. Why should people come to your church? Why is Christian

faith so important that you need to share it with others? Answering these should not just be an intellectual exercise. You need to involve your heart. Before looking for good evangelism programs or tactics, start with your heart. Learn to be moved by God's compassion for your city and weep for lost souls. I suggest you start by dwelling in the Scripture and discover God's heart for the world and why the Gospel is so essential and relevant to all human souls. Having a regular prayer meeting to pray for your city may be a good idea as well.

Once you identify your why, finding how is easy. Once we are moved by God's compassion, not our human motivations (e.g. "We need to invite people because our church membership is declining and/or we are struggling financially"), it becomes clear that God needs to initiate and provide us plans to reach other souls and cities. So, you pray; prayer becomes your major strategy and plan for your evangelism and outreach. You also begin to focus less on your own resources (e.g.



your amazing choir, praise band or church facility), but more on what matters most, God's grace and presence. The churches that are effective in Gospel witness may or may not have great music programs or church facility, but they sure know what people need to receive through all these means, the grace and presence of God.

I find that many Christians struggle with Gospel witness and evangelism, not because they do not have right tools and programs. The real issue lies in our hearts.

Rev. John Park

Then, what shall we do? I believe God's words to Moses in Exodus 4:2 are helpful: "What is that in your hand?" What resources are available to you? Who do you have in your congregation? Everyone has gifts and talents that God has given to use for his glory. Also, study your neighbourhood and city and find out what needs you can meet.

Lastly, I believe Alpha program is one program worth mentioning to help us become effective in sharing Gospel. You can check more details at www.alphacanada.org.

May God bless his church to share his glorious Gospel effectively. Amen.

It's a question of trust

By Ian Shaw

Trust is a critical and pervasive part of a healthy life. Confidence in the safety of the food we eat, the reliability of our justice system and dependable friends are all essential parts of being able to develop a life that is wholesome and fulfilling. Trust is therefore precious.

Trust is also fragile. Once abused or lost it can be difficult to regain, and broken trust can seriously and sometimes permanently damage an individual's ability to engage life fully, leaving them jaundiced, cynical or fearful. So, whom or what one trusts is a critical aspect of living life to its fullest.

When I was much younger, my mother

basically trusted anything in print which purported to be a factual account. She had great difficulty comprehending that a person could be perverse or unconcerned enough to report something that wasn't the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. To her great dismay, she discovered she gave too much credit to the fifth estate. Imagine the kind of shock today's social media would elicit!

Back then, leaders (whether civic, academic or religious) also received almost unquestioned confidence. Oh, most people knew they might "adjust" the truth a little — emphasize one part and overlook another to promote an agenda — but intentionally mislead, cover up or stifle alternate viewpoints? Not in freedom-loving, democratic Canada, not in our truth-seeking institu-

tions of higher learning, not in our humble, God glorifying, neighbour-serving churches! Sadly, more dismay.

This history is for me an ongoing mixture of sadness and dismay around trust. This negative perspective has two angles. In spite of all the counter evidence alluded to above, many still almost blindly put their trust in what they read and in leaders of various parts of society. And because such confidence is often poorly placed with the inevitable aftermath of hurt, many become unwilling or unable to trust and thus experience a greatly reduced fullness of life.

See TRUST Page 8

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.

Trust

Continued from Page 7

What to do? Find trustworthy friends — people of integrity with whom you can explore ideas and actions, uncover deceit, reflect on life as you experience it and risk some self-disclosure. You don't need many, but there is a face-to-face factor for life-enriching trust. (Electronically connected friends can fulfil this need for trusting relationships if face-to-face folk are not available.)

At the same time, invite God's Spirit of Truth [John 14-16] to help you discern what is true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling and gracious; as well as who are reliable persons, truly and humbly seeking to make society better for all.

But most of all heed Proverbs. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." Don't give over to another person or perspective or philosophy what belongs primarily to God. God alone is worthy of our complete trust. Begin there. Be discerning. Be prudent in including others into your confidence. Trust with those components may not eliminate trouble from life, but it will provide many blessings and is the best path for the fullness of life for which we were created and saved.

Paying the bills

Under God's grace, Renewal Fellowship does its work only with the financial gifts from our supporters. Almost 100 per cent of our revenue is from donations. Prayer is always the most important contribution you can make. And if the Lord is leading you to support us financially, there are a number of ways:

- ◇ Ask your church's Mission Committee to consider adding us to the congregation's annual budget.
- ◇ Encourage one other person to become a member of the Fellowship. Details are on at renewal-fellowship.ca, see SUPPORT US.
- ◇ Renew your membership.
- ◇ Make regular donations through the PAR plan on our website. Or email us at renewalfellowshipccc@gmail.com
- ◇ Make a one-time or occasional donation by credit card or by cheque. No matter what the method, we are grateful for all your financial support.

Want people from coast to coast to **pray** for your congregation? Send requests (specific dates and events are helpful) to Linda Shaw at RFPrayer@gmail.com.

The next deadline for our Prayer Calendar (October-December) is **Sept. 1**.



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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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