

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 IN PERSON or ONLINE.

Contact info Page 10.

The Renewal News is a quarterly publication of Renewal Fellowship.

We welcome your stories

Standing our ground

PCC amends guidelines after outcry

By **Andy Cornell**
RF Executive Director

PCC's Life and Mission Agency has amended its Calling a Minister guidelines in response to criticism from Renewal Fellowship and others within orthodoxy.

The issue was a new section added last fall that advised presbyteries not to appoint interim moderators who have exhibited discriminatory behaviour against LGBTQ+ people. This was in response to the redefinition of marriage to include two persons (along with one man and one woman) and allowed the call and ordination of ministers in same-gender marriage. The new section appeared one-sided and didn't address the need to be open to traditional views in keeping with parallel definitions and liberty of conscience. Renewal Fellowship's board of directors had a healthy conversation on the

matter. In the words of one director: what we now have is "not an inclusive definition; in fact, it's discrimination in itself." Said another: "As someone in orthodoxy, I'm a second-class citizen; I'm feeling muzzled. If I believe someone is unfit for ministry (due to lifestyle choice), I discriminate." In practical terms, "They're favouring one child over another."

In response, RF proposed a reworded section: "The presbytery shall instruct interim moderators when proceeding to a call to give equal consideration to all candidates. Any who, in the view of their presbytery, have exhibited discriminatory behaviour toward LGBTQI2+ individuals or have exhibited discriminatory behaviour towards those who adhere to traditional Biblical orthodoxy shall not be appointed interim moderators."

See RF 'on guard' Page 2

Jesus bids us shine

By **Andy Cornell**
RF Executive Director

Allow me to share a small joy we are experiencing in my congregation. It's the process of choosing music for our kid's message. For years, we didn't have wee ones or young parents but they're starting to show up and we have enough regulars to warrant Sunday School and a weekly kids message.

My music director and I have a blast each week as we go through old tunes that haven't been sung in years or even decades. We

meet weekly and joyfully sing through some oldies until one resonates.

Here's one from a few weeks ago:

"Jesus bids us shine with a pure, clear light. Like a kittle candle burning in the night. In this world darkness, so we must shine. You in your small corner, and I in mine." Did you have a smile on your face when read those words? Like me, the tune came back in an instant. Were you singing it in your head?

See SHINE Page 7

RF ‘on guard’ for orthodoxy

Continued from Page 1

We replied to the clerks and got the word out via social media and a Dec. 29 blog. Others of like mind in the PCC raised similar concerns.

On Feb. 15, we received an email from Ian Ross-McDonald, General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency, who thanked all parties who “raised important and helpful questions and concerns about “Calling a Minister”. We have done some more reflection on and review . . .”

The offending section was dropped. The focus was shifted away from advice on appointing to advice on instructions on how the Interim Mods should act. It no longer potentially marginalized those who adhere to Biblical orthodoxy — not that that was the intent of the old section 1.2.3 — it just would have been interpreted that way by some courts.

The “reflection and review” took into account “best practices in the areas of human resources and human rights legislation as they relate to the work of calling a minister; the standards and principles of the church’s polity; and changes the church has made by adopting two equal, parallel and protected definitions of marriage etc.” Ross-McDonald wrote.

“We also wanted to make changes to some wording in the document so that the document better articulated the roles and responsibilities of interim moderators, of search committees and of presbyteries in the important work of seeking and calling a minister.”

Old section — revised 2022

1.2 Appointing the Interim Moderator. The presbytery will appoint an interim moderator of Session . . . after considering the recommendation of the Presbytery Pastoral Relations/Ministry Committee. . . .

1. The presbytery should avoid appointing the same few people to serve as interim moderators. Interim moderator appointments should reflect the diversity in our denomination and involve equal consideration of all those eligible to serve.
2. The law of the Church does not permit discrimination against women ministers. The presbytery shall instruct interim moderators when proceeding with a call to give equal consideration to women candidates. Any who, in the view of their presbytery, have exhibited discriminatory

behaviour toward women shall not be appointed interim moderators (A&P 1980, p. 398, 64; A&P 1988, p. 391–92, 21).

3. The law of the church prohibits discrimination against LGBTQI2+ individuals (A&P 1994, p. 251–74, 56; A&P 2021, p. 617, 22). The presbytery shall instruct interim moderators when proceeding to a call to give equal consideration to LGBTQI2+ candidates (BF Appendix L). Any who, in the view of their presbytery, have exhibited discriminatory behaviour toward LGBTQI2+ individuals shall not be appointed interim moderators.
4. The presbytery will ensure that the interim moderator is in a secure and stable ministry and is not likely to consider a call to the vacant position. This will ensure fair treatment for all candidates (A&P 1987, p. 363).
5. Neither the departing minister nor any other minister currently serving in the same pastoral charge should be appointed interim minister or interim moderator.

1.3 Instructions to Interim Moderators. The presbytery is responsible to ensure that its interim moderators understand which categories of people are eligible for a call . . .

New section — revised 2023

1.2 The presbytery will appoint an interim moderator of Session . . . after considering the recommendation of the Presbytery Pastoral Relations/Ministry Committee. . . .

1. [unchanged — see above].
2. [same as 4 — see above]
3. [same as 5 — see above].

1.3 Instructions to Interim Moderators. **The presbytery shall instruct interim moderators when proceeding with a call to present to the search committee the personal profiles and applications of all eligible individuals. The presbytery is responsible to ensure that interim moderators understand that individuals are eligible to serve as ordained ministers in The Presbyterian Church in Canada regardless of their age, gender, race, marital status or identification as LGBTQI.**

Living Water Forest Church

By Ian and Hannah Marnoch

Let me begin with a word about what Forest Church is not. It is not a transplantation of Sunday morning's sanctuary worship to the outside. That's what we do in the summer when we worship on the church lawn!

Forest church is an experiment in participatory worship of the Triune God in nature. By "nature" I mean all of the things, processes and events in the world that are not human nor made by humans. It includes the plants, animals, rocks, water, the seasons, volcanic eruptions, fire, flood, rain, snow, etc.

By "participatory" I mean engaging all of the senses together with the intellect, the emotions, and physical actions.

This involves study (learning both the Bible and the natural world), allowing for moments of awe (those moments when you cry out: "Hey, c'mere and look at this!" or, "Isn't that neat.") and ultimately it involves discerning theological meaning.

Living Water Forest Church began in March, 2022. Typically, 4-12 people gather in the afternoon of the third Sunday of each month. We chose to meet on the third Sunday of the month because it

is the Sunday closest to the season changes: the equinoxes and the solstices. With the exception of the sum-

God's creation changes with the changing seasons.

Each gathering opens with a prayer

through which we affirm God's steadfast love surrounding us in every hour of each day and season of life. We read and reflect on Scripture and we engage in some form of prayerful participation with our natural surroundings. This usually involves a time of Wandering and Wondering: walking the trails and engaging our senses in observing. Although, sometimes a campfire is involved or planting seeds or a Bannock-cook. When we return to the circle, participants share insights from their wanderings and wonderings. Then we close with what we call a

Water Ceremony. Our water ceremony involves a common pitcher of water drawn from the nearest natural water source. Worshippers take turns pouring into a common bowl while offering a prayer of thanksgiving or a few words to God about their worship.

The theological foundation of the forest church model is grounded in the teaching that the living and triune God has created all that we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell – along with the non-tangible elements (emotional, cognitive, supernatural).



Rev. Ian Marnoch leads worship during a summer 2023 gathering

mer months, when the abundance of ticks inland drives us to the shores of the St. Clair River, we gather at the same spot: a local wetland. By gather-

“When the heavens declare the glory of God, what do you hear? Trees rustling in a breeze? The call of a red-winged blackbird! The trickle of a stream?”

— Hannah Marnoch

ing at the same spot each month, we can experience how this one spot of

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Living Water Forest Church

Continued from Page 3

We can therefore know, worship, and even relate with God through participation with the natural surroundings.

Bruce Stanley, the author of *Forest Church: A Field Guide to a Spiritual Connection with Nature*, refers to Scripture as God's first book of revelation and the natural world as God's second book. These titles refer to authority, not sequence. Obviously, nature pre-dates scripture, but to know God through nature we must interpret what we observe through the lens of scripture. As we experiment with participatory worship of God in nature, one of our foci is to learn to read the Second Book with insights from the First Book.

For example, if you were to observe that a tree produces shade, food, and oxygen — that it provides for life and enhances the beauty of the surroundings — one might suppose that these god-like qualities suggest the tree belongs to the realm of the divine: that it is a god. This, of course, neither tells the truth of the Triune Creator, nor of the tree! However, if through the lens of scripture, you were to consider the life-giving and aesthetic qualities of the tree and discern that the God who created such a thing is the God who desires life and beauty and provides for such, this interpretation both glorifies God and tells the truth of His creation!

Our central focus of Living Water Forest Church is to practise faithfully reading the second book of revelation. This involves observing the natural world, learning, allowing one's self moments of awe, and discerning theological meaning with the help of Scripture.

We welcome all people who want to experience participatory worship of God in nature to join us. Please contact Rev. Ian for more information (519-813-9646) or ian.moorepastoralcharge@gmail.com



Encouraging words are heard

“

If you have 1/3 of the denomination that holds to an orthodox theology you are still very well situated to be a positive force for missional change in the PCC. The odds have been far worse at various points in church history! I am firmly convinced that an astonishing renewal of the Church across North America is on the way. There are plenty of hints that it will start with so-called ‘ethnic churches’ and spread out from there. Churches that are praying and acting to reach new people (as



We love feedback. Here are some recent comments and statements received by Renewal Fellowship.

is so prevalent in ethnic churches) will lead the way.” — *Judy Paulsen,*

Professor of Evangelism, Director of the Institute of Evangelism, Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, email encouragement in response to plans for our 2023 Renewal Day.

“ I was touched by and impressed with this message. I will print it to hand out to a Ladies’ Bible study group of which I am a part. — *Edith Wright, responding to The Joy of Orthodoxy blog invitation to the January Renewal Café.*

What we’re doing

Renewal Fellowship’s mission is “to lead each other and The Presbyterian Church in Canada to authentic Biblical thinking, powerful Spirit-led prayer, and effective Gospel witness.”

PCC Pastors Retreat. With a surplus from last year’s gathering and continued financial support from Vaughan Community Church, we are proceeding with a second retreat Nov. 6-8, 2023 at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga. Details and registration info coming soon.

Renewal Café are small-group gatherings held via Zoom which are typically centred on a specific question or theme. (See Page 6.)

Listening Ear Here is a pool of mature believers who meet online (or in person if logistics allow) with individuals who need a listening ear. It’s not therapy, counseling or mentorship but an effort to facilitate a community and encourage believers. It’s a ministry for the listener as well as the speaker. If you need to talk about where

you’re at in your walk of faith, if you have questions or if you just need to “unpack” we can pair you with a listener. This ministry is for adults of all ages and stages of life.

Daily prayer calendar under the leadership of Linda Shaw continues to find its way into the



hands of believers who need encouragement and support.

Pray for GA is a dedicated campaign in the four weeks leading up to General Assembly which includes online prayer rooms praying prior to and during each sederunt. We started this in 2021. We will do the same this year.

GA Prayer Room: General Assembly Office is generously providing us with a dedicated Prayer Room during this year’s

GA in Halifax. It will be open to all GA attendees prior to, during and after each sederunt. It will be a place for a morning devotion, sharing, debriefing and prayer during proceedings. It will be staffed by Executive Director Andy Cornell and faithful volunteers. (This initiative will be the focus of Andy’s travel budget in 2023.)

Renewal Day and AGM: For the first time since 2019, our annual gathering will be held in person on Saturday, March 25. The event will also be livestreamed, which allows active participation whether you’re in person or online. It will be graciously hosted by St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Welland, Ontario. Our speaker will be Cory McKenna, founder of The Cross Current, whose mission is to normalize sharing of the Gospel. Watch for the full story in the summer edition of The Renewal News.

renewalfellowshipcc@gmail.com

The Renewal Café is open

March invitation: Thank God for Holy Spirit revival

You've probably seen the news of what's going on at Asbury University, a private Christian college in Kentucky. It started during a regular chapel service on Feb. 8 – but didn't stop.

"After the benediction, the gospel choir began to sing a final chorus—and then something began to happen that defies easy description. Students did not leave. They were struck by what seemed to be a quiet but powerful sense of transcendence, and they did not want to go. They stayed and continued to worship," Asbury professor Tom McCall described to Christianity Today.

Word got out quickly and students from dozens of other colleges and curious believers started showing up at all hours. It's been going 24 hours ever since, unscripted. No one appears to be in charge. No worship team – new musicians just show up. People just take to the platform to witness. There's constant prayer – alone, in pairs and in circles. Some lay prostrate, face down. Arms raised. Tears flow.

Alexander Presta, editor of the student-run website The Asbury Collegian, told Christian Broadcasting Network the scene is a "posture of radical humility."

As of writing it's been more than 11 days, and it's still going strong. It's expanded to overflow chapels at Asbury and spread to other colleges. As expected, it's attracted many thousands of curious and faithful and the quiet campus has become an international tourist attraction. (The college is now taking steps to reign it in to restore some normalcy leading up to midterms.)

None of this was planned, school

officials and students say. "It was the Holy Spirit choosing that day, falling down and touching our hearts. You knew it was different. 'Was this scheduled?' people have asked us. No, this was purely God. . . no one wants to leave," said Presta.

This is an age of shorter attention spans where typical worship is no longer than one hour. Some pastors, like yours truly, are trending down to 45 minutes. How does one make sense

We're all looking for hope these days. We need it. Some are desperate for it.

Critics might say this is just an Asbury thing, nothing new. Two weeks in 1908, three days in 1921, 118 hours in 1950, 144 hours in 1970, 127 hours in 1992, seven days in 2006 and now this. It may grow a bit but eventually peter out. Life will go on.

But what if?

What if it's the beginning of something greater? There is a widespread expectation within charismatic circles that we are on the verge of the Next Great Awakening and that the Lord has been preparing His church for a few decades.

Awakening or not, let us just lift up holy hands in concert with our kindred Gen 'Z' souls on campus and give thanks and praise for the Holy Spirit's presence, for the faithful ones whose hearts and minds are open to the Spirit's movement and are willing and able to respond.

May similar revival happen in the remnant faithful congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. That prayer is at the core of The Renewal Fellowship.

Let's talk about all of this at the next Renewal Cafe, a Zoom community which meets to share our frustrations and joys, our good news and our challenges – all in a safe space.

The Asbury revival may have ended or wound down by the time we meet. Or not. Still, we can pray.

<end of invitation>

A total of 19 people reserved a spot. In the end, 11 turned up, which is typical. Here are my notes for the opening devotion.

See Renewal Café Page 8

"And let us not neglect our meeting together . . . but encourage one another."

Hebrews
10:25



Renewal Café



of this non-stop revival?

"Many people say that in the chapel they hardly even realize how much time has elapsed. It is almost as though time and eternity blur together as heaven and earth meet. Anyone who has witnessed it can agree that something unusual and unscripted is happening," Prof. McCall reported.

"The holy love of the triune God is apparent, and there is an inexpressible sweetness and innate attractiveness to it. It is immediately obvious why no one wants to leave and why those who must leave want to come back as soon as they can."

His words send genuine Holy Spirit chills down one side of my body. I'm reminded that in heaven, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day.

Renewal Fellowship raises its flag

‘Voluntary associations’ already exist in the PCC, committee told

To the Special Committee on Listening, Confession and Associations:

Thank you for the work you are doing to raise awareness of the vital need to address marginalization. Along with you, we recognize that courts, congregations and ministries within the PCC are not always welcoming to those who do not belong to the majority, whether cultural or theological.

Since 1983, The Renewal Fellowship within The Presbyterian Church in Canada (RF) has existed as a voice for those who are concerned about the theological drift in the denomination from orthodoxy to liberalism. Those who adhere to a traditional understanding of scripture and practice continue to be marginalized. This is especially true following the approval of parallel definitions of marriage in 2021, which marked a formal shift in theology.

We agree with the suggestion in your November 2022 discussion document that “relational connections” are needed. We specifically point to your example of “places of theological and missional companionship” where “voluntary associations could be places where theologically diverse Presbyterians find belonging.” Such a body already exists. The Renewal Fellowship is a national, self-supporting grassroots organization. We have a part-time paid executive director, an administrative assistant, web-

master, prayer coordinator, a board of directors and members and supporters from coast to coast. Our message to those in orthodoxy is that “you are not alone.”

We speak not only for ourselves but for any volunteer organization which provides community and support to minority voices. We would ask that General Assembly:

1. encourage the courts and congregations of the denomination to lend support to any volunteer association through generous use of buildings, prayers, co-operative ventures and other relevant means; and
2. provide visibility to RF (and other similar voluntary associations) on the floor of GA and on

the presbyterian.ca website.

A complete description of our doctrinal basis, vision, mission and concerns can be found on our website, renewal-fellowship.ca, along with an overview of our recent activity.

In Christ alone we stand,



Rev. Andy Cornell
Executive Director

Among the tasks given by General Assembly to a special committee in response to racism last year was to look into the idea of establishing voluntary associations to provide places of community. Renewal Fellowship’s response was sent in late January.

Shine

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Young families are returning, I am convinced, because I adhere to authentic Biblical thinking in my messages. The Gospel truth does not change. My preaching does not need to get with the times. Technology — absolutely. Practice — for sure. But I will not (cannot) stray from the unadulterated truth that Jesus is the only way to

God. And that we are sinners and need redemption. And the only way to grow closer to God and to each other is to humbly submit.

And not just younger folks but all ages. The secret to a healthy congregation is no secret. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday today and forever.

That’s my program and I’m sticking to it. We at Renewal Fellowship are here to encourage one another and

to share stories of how God is working. The witness of Ian Marnoch’s congregation which celebrates God in nature while remaining steadfastly rooted in orthodoxy is a powerful witness. See Page 3-4.

How is God working in your midst? Anything to share?

I’m all ears.

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Renewal Café

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“It’s been 10 days since the invitation for this Renewal Cafe went out – and I knew the situation would change. In human terms, the Asbury Revival has ended. On Feb. 19 the university announced that services would be moved off campus starting Feb. 23 – exactly one week ago. The reason was practical – the campus and the entire town were being overrun by people traveling from around the world. It was overwhelming. What was begun by The Holy Spirit and sustained by the same Spirit around the clock for two weeks had become a tourist attraction. Whether the university did the right thing, I don’t know.

What I do know is that we cannot shut down the Holy Spirit. We can try, but good luck with that. I’m not casting judgment on the university administration for stepping in. After all, order within worship is a command, especially when charisma is involved.

So what now? There is a tendency for believers who hunger and thirst for revival and awakening to overthink. It’s a human tendency. We can spend countless hours theorizing. Countless blogs and columns have been written in the wake of the revival. Everyone, it seems, has to have an opinion. On that matter, it’s OK to talk and share. But I’m cautioned not to draw any conclusions. Especially if we think we have an inside track on the mind of Christ.

Like many in church circles, I first heard about the revival a few days after it broke out and I’ve been keeping track of it ever since. The divine message I’ve heard all along since this revival began – and by divine I mean the Holy Spirit’s personal nudges – was that a revival cannot be manufactured by human hands. The Holy Spirit will convict people, will guide, anoint, equip, will move. We are invited to be still and allow it to happen.

Robert Coleman, who is 94 years old, is a professor of evangelism at Asbury Seminary at Asbury and witnessed previous revivals in 1950 and in 1970. He quotes the Lord, who said, “‘Follow me.’ You just follow Jesus.” Follow His command to go, baptize and teach, knowing that He is with us to the end of the age. Don’t look for a crowd. Just look to the person next to you. “Make a friend and continue to develop that friendship; that’s how we make disciples, by being together. Put your arm around them, love them, show them that you care for their soul.” (Source, Religion News Service, as published by The Washington Post, Mrch 1, 2023)

One notable thing the Asbury revival has provided is a renewed sense of hope. The Holy Spirit of Christ is working. And the timing is perfect. Previous revivals at Asbury all broke out during the coldest months of the year. Of the nine major revivals at Asbury since 1905, seven began in February and two started in March. That’s a powerful sign that God shows up in the darkest places, when cold wintery days have taken their toll. In poetic terms, we’re being primed for spring. New life and new growth.

But these are only my thoughts. This cafe is an opportunity to share, or just listen. But first, I will pray.”

A vibrant 75-minute discussion followed.

Renewal Café typically meets the first Thursday of most months. Watch for invitations by email.



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

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www.renewal-fellowship.ca

RF’s mission

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