

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 twin priorities are

PRAYER &
PASTORAL CARE

Contact info
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The Renewal News is a quarterly publication of Renewal Fellowship.

We welcome your stories

A pastoral presence

RF brings encouragement to GA commissioners

Renewal's board of directors made a strategic decision this year to concentrate the Executive Director's (E-D) travel budget on our presence at General Assembly. It's about getting the best bang for the buck – where we can reach the greatest number of people in the PCC. GA is a gold mine of opportunities to provide encouragement to anyone who needs it and make new connections. We developed a four-point plan:

1. Prayer Room at the Assembly. The principal clerk quickly granted our request for a room somewhere on campus. An added bonus this year was General Assembly Office's offer to distribute an information sheet to commissioners.

2. Zoom Prayer Room, organized by the E-D and staffed by RF directors and supporters.

3. The E-D being a visible presence at Assembly, talking to as many people as possible, renewing acquaintances and making new connections.

4. The E-D would bring the Sunday message to a local congregation.

From departure to the airport to arrival back at home, it was 104 hours of listening, talking, preaching, socializing and praying – with a few hours of sleep here and there.

Some highlights.

Zoom Room Marathon. A very dedicated group of faithful, Spirit-led prayer warriors led the charge, remaining online during the opening sederunt on Sunday and then for approximately 12 hours straight on each of the following three days.

See GA PRAYER Page 4

Let's get on with it!

By **Sandy Copland-Dufour**
RF Board Chairperson

Hello Friends and Fellow Jesus Followers. I am writing this as we approach Trinity Sunday. In Matthew's gospel the 11 have returned to Galilee as Jesus had told them previously. On meeting up with Jesus there is a dual response – worship and doubt. In spite of the uncertainty of some, Jesus gives them, and us, His "Great Commission."

He prefaces the command itself with

the statement of His authority, with the reminder that it had been "given." The disciples and many other followers had certainly witnessed His authority over the winds and the waves. They had seen and perhaps even experienced His healing power over spiritual mental and physical disease. They had watched and listened as Jesus challenged the ideas and traditions of the religious leaders of the time. Ultimately, they had witnessed His power over death – the death of others and even His own death.

See AUTHORITY Page 2



General Assembly highlights

By **Andy Cornell**
Executive Director

From a Renewal perspective, three matters stood out at General Assembly.

Liberty of conscience: The Clerks of Assembly proposed a revision to the existing (2022) guidelines regarding the exercise of Liberty of Conscience and Action in regard to participation in ordinations, inductions of ministers and installations of ruling elders. From their written report: “An individual who holds the belief that marriage is between a man and a woman is permitted to exercise liberty of conscience and action and not be censured” subject to certain limitations. “Such a person may, without fear of censure: abstain from voting for the ordination, induction or installation, vote against the ordination, induction or installation, *provided reasons for that vote are not based on the candidate’s sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status and voiced publicly as such*, send regrets to any meeting dealing with the ordination, induction or installation.” The words in italics are what the clerks were proposing to add.

The following are excerpts from the GA discussion.

“The wording allows this freedom of conscience but yet we’re not allowed to talk about it. Is that what it says?” – Audry Barton, elder (Oak Ridges).

“If a gay, married minister was before a presbytery in a call process . . . it would not be in order for a person to speak against the call based on the minister’s marital status or gender identification or sexual orientation. . . . those are things that have been decided by the church so if person were to raise the subjects again it would be like starting the discussion all over

again. Those decision have been made.” – Deputy Clerk Don Muir in response.

“Within that wide spectrum of eligibility [for ordination, induction and installation] we say people can land anywhere on that spectrum. If you wanted to hold a position here [motions with one hand] you are not disallowing the other position to be held there [motions with other hand]. Liberty of conscience and action is given to you to not participate, but not so you speak against someone’s eligibility based on things we’ve already said are OK. . . . We’re asking people to respect the statements we’ve made. . . . If you choose to voice your reason for voting and that reason is counter what our church has already decided, which is that everyone is eligible to be considered . . . then the moderator can rule out of order.” — Principal Clerk Victor Kim.

“A person’s freedom of conscience, the entire Reformation, is based on the understanding that we are responsible to the authority of scripture. And so we can voice our dissent based on that . . . This exclusion puts a document of the church on a higher level than scripture.” – Denise Allen-Macartney, minister (Ottawa)

“Action within a Presbyterian polity involves the expression of one’s opinion, whether one agrees with it or not.” – Brian Fraser, minister (Westminster).

“We respect other positions; we’re trying to work within the situation. . . . Our presbytery is barely surviving . . . there are so many congregations closed . . . If this were to go, the presbytery may be in danger.” – Alfred Lee, minister (Western Han-Ca).

See **ASSEMBLY Page 8**

AUTHORITY

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So, they should have been assured of His authority – all authority in heaven and on earth.

Then why did some doubt? Perhaps they had come to understand that Jesus would soon leave them and return to the Father as He had said. Perhaps they realized that now the ball was in their court. They may have recalled Jesus’ words that they would do greater

things than what He had done. Yikes! I think I may have been among the some that doubted!

But Jesus presses on. Go! Baptize! Make disciples! Preach! Teach! And do all this with the full authority of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Who me? Yes, you. Remember everything I taught you and pass it on. And in case we are still doubting, Jesus gives that wonderful promise. And surely, I am with you, not just now and again, but always, to the end of time. That

same promised “Immanuel, God with us” that starts off Matthew’s gospel, ties it all together with the promise of God’s abiding presence.

What are we waiting for? I pray that the Lord Jesus will give us, through the work of His Holy Spirit, the courage and perseverance needed to continue on with Jesus’ loving work in His world. There are many more disciples to be made. Much preaching and teaching is still needed. So, let’s get on with it!



CORY MCKENNA OF THE CROSS CURRENT

... speaks to the faithful who gathered at St. Andrew's Welland while a similar-sized group watched online

Renewal Day 2023

Like wild animals removed from their natural environments, are today's Western believers overly domesticated and thereby innocuous? Have we allowed ourselves to be tamed under the control of the ruler of this world in order to fit in and not be too offensive?

Cory McKenna, the speaker at our 2023 Renewal Day and annual meeting, has a unique calling. As the founder of The Cross Current, his job is to equip the Church to normalize sharing the Gospel in our personal and community relationships.

Cory delivered exactly the wakeup call and rallying cry the church needs. If you don't have time to listen to the entire thing, fast forward to 36:06 where he tells a story about domesticated tigers which are removed from their mothers at birth and raised around humans. They have no idea who

they really are. But there's a warning. If they see another tiger, they come alive. Watch out.

Before he became an evangelist, Cory was a domesticated believer. He'd never seen a true believer in action. All it took was seeing one and his life was changed.

We are called to make disciples and to practice the Great Commission. Am I truly a disciple if I am not actively working to make new disciples? Who is coming to the Lord as a result of what I am doing? If not, I have to ask what's wrong.

Is the problem the lack of other on-fire believers as examples in my life? Maybe. But I suspect the problem is staring at me in the mirror. How well do I know the Lord?

For that matter have I ever truly met Him? I mean actually allowed Him in? Or is it just a superficial feel good, say and do the right

things kind of faith and go through the motions?

We are, as Cory states in his insightful presentation, built for battle. Are we avoiding the conflict and deliberately living as if it's permanent peacetime?

God has a natural order for things. Not just in the animal kingdom. If the true life of the soul is lived in the spirit then should we not be devoted to bolder pursuit of the sanctified spirit that's more in line with the Spirit of Christ? Yes. No question about that. So, why aren't we taking that more seriously?

Watch the presentation and AGM online.



Search "Renewal Fellowship"

Pastor's Retreat to return

Buoyed by the success of last November's retreat, an organizing team has been meeting regularly since February to plan the next one.

Details were released in early May and registrations began on June 1.

The invitation goes like this: Dear pastor: Are you so caught up in your day-to-day busy-ness you don't have time to dream? I don't mean wishful thinking. I'm talking about being still long enough to allow the Spirit of Christ to inspire you. Or maybe you see the culture around you awash in playful celebration while the church seems to be lacking in joy.

Our Triune God is the embodiment of wonder. The scripture is a

rich wellspring of sanctified imagination. So how do we live in that promise?

Come join us for "**Believing is seeing: Holy imagination**" – a retreat for PCC Pastors – Nov. 5-8 at Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga.

Rev. Dr. **Richard Topping** – professor of reformed studies at St. Andrew's Hall and president of Vancouver School of Theology – will lead the journey. The Rev. **James Yang** will be heading a team to lead us in worship along the way. A team of spiritual directors will be on hand, led by Rev. **Chris Little**. There'll be time for small group discussion, prayer in groups of two or three or quiet meditation. We'll also gently invite you to make new connections

with colleagues or to form your own support group that can continue post-retreat. And there will be time simply to be alone.

The cost of accommodation, food and all activities will be a ridiculously low \$50. A generous travel subsidy is available for those coming from 500 km or more. Space will be limited to 50. This retreat is designed for anyone serving as a pastor in a PCC congregation or an aligned ministry or expression. Content and worship will be firmly rooted in reformed Christian orthodoxy.

This retreat is organized by The Renewal Fellowship in partnership with Vaughan Community Church, which has provided generous financial assistance for the second year in a row.

GA PRAYER

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We opened the room shortly after 7 a.m. Eastern to allow Zoom pray-ers to participate in the GA Prayer Room morning devotion. The Zoom Room stayed open until the closure of the evening sederunts. During each sederunt, the E-D kept the pray-ers informed via chat. The Zoom pray-ers would come and go during the day but the room remained open. Between sederunts, someone would enable their screen and play worship videos. We are grateful for the Zoom Room leadership of Glynis Faith, Sybil Mosley, Nan St. Louis, Patricia Allison, Candace Bahadoor, Norine Love, Ronda Bosch, Linda and Ian Shaw and Christopher Jorna. Our apologies and empathies go to faithful friends who tried to participate but technology gremlins prevented them from entering.

The faithful few – truly alive!

It was an honour for the E-D to bring the message to the combined Elmsdate St. Matthew's-Hardwood Lands congregation in the Halifax area, giving minister Beth Matkinson a break. (See message excerpt Page 7.) As with many smaller congregations, they have fewer people. But those who remain are spiritually alive and are eager to engage with the community. St. Matthew's July VBS is held at one of the local fire halls – a great partnership. I encouraged them to pray early and often over the unchurched families attending VBS – may they be touched by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

After the potluck lunch, I was about to depart when one of them stopped me and wondered if we could have an impromptu prayer meeting. Faith works in the moment. A half dozen of us gathered in a circle and prayed for all kinds of things. It was honest and un-

scripted. My prayer: "Holy Spirit, bless the hearts of the faithful ones, may they refuse to be discouraged by decline, may they look to Christ to do the heavy lifting." What this world needs is more people who are willing to stop, drop – and pray.

Meeting of Minds. The Prayer Room was also a handy place for kindred souls to gather if they needed a quiet place to talk. It was also the place where the commissioners of both Han-Ca presbyteries met with the Clerk of Assembly for an off-the-record discussion of the controversial recommendation to place limits on liberty of conscience.

People, people. Every meal was an opportunity to meet new people. The Renewal Fellowship contact list grew by a dozen names. And those who adhere to the unchanging authority of scripture were reminded that they are not alone.

Young Adults, Gospel & creativity

Parkwood's Interactive Worship Experiment

By Philip MacFie

Worship is not a performance but a participative experience. Parkwood Presbyterian Church (Ottawa, ON) has been exploring this concept through a series of monthly interactive church services led by young adults (those aged 18-35).

The need for an interactive church service sprang out of Parkwood's youth ministry. The congregation

is blessed to have an active ministry to pre-teens and teenagers aged 11 to 18 led by the congregation's dynamic Christian Education Support Worker, Vicky Mabie. However, the congregation was left wondering what to do once the teens graduated. Also, the youth leadership team - all in their 20s and 30s - realized that they had much to give but also needed to

receive. Leaders desired an opportunity to worship on their own terms and share Christ's message with friends their own age.

The solution Parkwood adopted was an interactive time of worship once a month on a Sunday evening. The service involves contemporary worship, prayer and a discussion-based sermon. The message is closer to a Bible study than a traditional sermon. Pastor James Hurd focuses on a particular passage of scripture and asks questions that bring the text to life. Participants can ask questions, make observations or recount short anecdotes. Young adults are able to participate in worship by reading a scripture passage, saying a prayer, or playing on the worship team.

The interactive service is not developed by osmosis as preparation is required. Roughly a month prior to the service, a planning meeting is held between the pastor and the young adults of the congregation. Po-

tential themes and scripture passages are discussed with the topic and Bible texts for the service agreed upon by consensus. At this point, it is up to the young adults themselves to promote and prepare. The church's secretary, Elizabeth Mabie, designs a poster which is promoted through social media. The young adults make a list of songs to include in worship.

So far, Parkwood has held three interactive services. Two of the services were for young adults only

while the third was open to the entire congregation. This last was a special Lenten evening service where the Young adults introduced the congregation to new songs and stimulated a thought-provoking discussion on attitudes and actions.

The most rewarding part has been seeing my fellow young adults participate in worship in new ways.

This may be play-

ing the piano or learning what a call to worship is. The young adults would be the first to admit that the services are a work in progress. The biggest challenge so far has been promoting the services among young adults on the fringes of the congregation. The services themselves are the easy part compared to inviting friends and family.

Despite the challenges, the Parkwood young adults are excited about what the future holds. For those young adults in the Ottawa-area, feel free to join us. For those elsewhere in the country, my hope is that the interactive worship service concept stimulates your creative juices. The gospel may not change, but there are always new ways to worship Him to be discovered.

Philip MacFie is a member of the board of directors of The Renewal Fellowship



Renewal's financial situation

Board may be faced with difficult decisions in November

The good news is that Renewal Fellowship continues to be blessed with financial support from its members and supporting congregations. Every month, we receive significant donations. All of them believe that what we are doing to speak out on behalf of the evangelical wing of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and provide encouragement for ministers, elders, members and adherents is worthy of support.

In 2022, we received \$32,740 from individuals and families, \$11,873 from congregations, a grant of \$1,500 and free office space. It's humbling.

The bad news is that it wasn't enough to support our personnel, operational and mission expenses. The shortage amounted to approximately \$23,000. We can pay the bills only by dipping into financial reserves. Those reserves exist largely due to two sizable bequests. The Estate of Margaret Hill gifted \$50,000 in September 2020. In 2016, we received \$50,000 from the Estate of Myrtle Elizabeth Inglis. (We are still waiting for a \$10,000 bequest that was notified about two years ago.)

By the grace of God, we have been able to remain afloat. But we can't bank on one-time gifts. The reserves are rapidly dwindling.

Renewal started 2023 with total equity of \$62,443. To the end of April we have received:

- \$7,624 from donations from individuals (compares to same-period donations of \$10,269 in 2022 and \$12,329 in 2021.)

- \$2,042 from donations from congregations (compares to same-period donations of \$3,339 in 2022 and \$6,142 in 2021.)

- \$570 from memberships.

This is a total income of \$11,086.

During the same four-month period this year, our expenses totaled \$24,255

(compares to same-period donations of \$22,266 in 2022 and \$22,911 in 2021) for a net loss of \$13,169.

Our net assets are now \$49,274. Our situation is not sustainable. If nothing changes, we will run out of money.

Our financial story is not unlike many congregations, whose budgets are directly tied to the number of people in the pews. The box to the right details total membership from RF's beginning. For its first dozen years, there was a part-time Executive director. In 1995, the E-D became full time. These were the glory days. It included a robust membership and the publication of a national periodical,

Channels, which was the voice for Reformed orthodoxy.

Unfortunately, there was decline. The E-D position had to be reduced to part time in

2013, where it remains at 40 per cent (two days per week on average.)

On that note, personnel costs (E-D and the Administrative Assistant) take up most of the operating budget – so they'd have to be reduced substantially.

The RF board of directors is well aware that tough decisions may have to be made. It's why we are gathering for an in-person retreat Nov. 4-5.

The bottom line is pretty obvious. For RF to continue to be a voice for evangelicals in the PCC and a source of encouragement for those who are now in the minority, we need an increase in donations. In an era of declining congregations and increasing costs of living, we realize it's a very tough ask.

RF's leadership will simply have to deal with whatever reality we find ourselves in. The board will also have to ask whether the will remains to support this organization at all – or can we operate on a further-reduced scale?

We cast all of this information out and simply ask you to pray.

Year Members

1983	379
1984	468
1985	646
1986	723
1987	606
1988	827
1989	732
1990	702
1991	761
1992	674
1993	774
1994	795
1995	808
1996	832
1997	856
1998	837
1999	963
2000	1,030
2001	1,056
2002	1,067
2003	1,027
2004	1,021
2005	844
2006	857
2007	812
2008	701
2009	714
2010	613
2011	614
2012	590
2013	583
2014	591
2015	591
2016	524
2017	520
2018	527
2019	496
2020	441
2021	420
2022	402

“Our situation is not sustainable. If nothing changes, we will run out of money.”

'You are Peter'

June 4 message from the Executive Director to Elmsdale-Hardwood Lands

Matthew 16:13-18 is a fascinating conversation. And revealing. It sheds as much light on the relationship between Jesus and His people today as it did about the dynamics He had with His disciples.

The problem then was that the world rejected The Son of God outright. To the Rulers of the Visible World (the Roman Empire) He was a nuisance to be controlled or eliminated. To the church of the day, he was a threat to their worldly privileged position.

I wonder how the world and the church would react if Christ was to return today? I can't imagine He would be received any better for the simple reason that human nature has not changed. We think we're more advanced. But the essential way we think and operate is tied into our basic human nature, which is fallen.

Let's take a closer look at this scene. Jesus has an agenda with every question. He is the ultimate teacher and the opening question is that first step into an important lesson. He knows what they're going to say. Their response is sad because it reveals their ignorance. How could Jesus be John the Baptist if John was still alive? It's a puzzling answer. Elijah or Jeremiah make a bit more sense. Both prophets were known for attacking the corruption within the church. Christ was cut from the same cloth. He pointed to hypocrisy, the way the teachers of the law were all about legalism and missed the spirit of the law and how they loved money. But the disciples still didn't see the big picture, the Kingdom agenda.

Matthew 16:13-18 (NLT)

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

Jesus knew all that, so He came at it from a different direction. "But who do **you** say I am?" He wasn't interested in second hand information. (Same thing with us today — Jesus wants to know how He has impacted us personally.) And then Peter hit the nail on the head. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Here was Peter with an answer that if spoken in public might have resulted in arrest and trial for blasphemy.

Jesus, ever the wise and loving teacher, didn't condemn the naïve responses. Rather, he praised the correct outlook. True wisdom comes from above. Fear or respect of the Lord is the beginning of

wisdom. Divine truth is often at odds with the wisdom of this world. Where are the wise teachers of this age? Or any age? God makes foolish so-called secular wisdom. Talk, we are told, is cheap. And there is plenty of chatter in this fallen world. There is no shortage of people who think they hold the truth. They seek a platform and post their videos and sell their books. It's all about them.

Peter had ears to hear. Eyes to see. He spoke the truth. Again, Jesus knew what Peter would say. So what follows is not a reward for coming up with the correct answer. Peter is the wild and crazy disciple. And he was still chosen to be among the apostles who would lay the foundations for the early church. Dwell on that for a second.

What's next is key: ". . . and all the powers of hell will not conquer it." The powers of hell and darkness, Satan and his legion, are immensely powerful. Those dark powers will not prevail if we are rooted in Christ. Which means we believe in Him as the Messiah, the Son of God. And nothing less.

Throughout history, the church has come under attack. Satan is real. He is the author of deception and master of lies. He is the wolf in sheep's clothing. In fact, he wants us to think that he doesn't exist.

Satan is creative and has wormed his way into every part of human culture. No one is immune. The trouble is that too many believers suffer from pride. They are too focused on themselves rather than the pursuit of God's will.

A full copy of the message can be found at renewal-fellowship.ca

Assembly

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“Someone had said that we hold two different positions on marriage. The fact is we hold one position on marriage which is that within the one position people may choose to be aligned on this side [motions] or on this side” [motions with other hand.] – Victor Kim

“Yet one of those two positions . . . holds that certain things go against where I would stand and my congregation would stand and to be told that I can no longer voice that opinion in Christian love and respect . . . to me takes it too far.” – Sean Howard, minister (West Toronto)

“I cannot help but think of the Rainbow communion and the harm in which words have done to the hearts and lives of many . . . There’s an element of Christian love which is in limiting one’s freedoms at times.” – Hugh Donnelly, minister (Waterloo-Wellington)

After several speakers, Deputy Clerk Muir suggested that the clerks take another look at the guidelines. Debate ended when commissioners referred the issue back to the clerks.

For a full picture of this rich one-hour discussion, go to the YouTube recording of Sederunt 3, starting at the eight-minute mark. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuKCSquGX3c>

Medical Assistance in Dying. In 2017, General Assembly approved a bold statement upholding the sanctity of life in a document named “Physician Assisted Suicide” (PAS.) It was intended as an interim response and it was commended to the church for study. Feedback was received and in 2019, the Church Doctrine Committee (CDC) prepared a report with revisions to the 2017 statement. In 2021, commissioners proposed adding “Medical Assistance in Dying” to the title. In 2022, in response to a significant number of requests, “Physician Assisted Suicide” was dropped entirely from the name.

At 2023 GA, the CDC proposed that they continue to discuss the issue and produce a new report but with no specific deadline. Commissioners replaced that with a more specific motion requiring MAID terminology and reflecting what appears to be wide acceptance of the practice. Commissioners overwhelmingly voted in favour.

Several commissioners referred to the changing landscape and the fact that the 2017 document contained “harmful and triggering” terms, a reference to PAS.

In the words of one commissioner: “Are we looking at the church being part of the decision or looking at providing background support?”

On the plus side. It was encouraging to see unanimous bipartisan (evangelical and liberal) support for the outrage over the persecution of LGBTQ people in Uganda. Same with the National Indigenous Ministries Council and the Special Committee on Listening in response to Han-Ca racism overtures.



Board of Directors

Lisa Baker, Kenora, Ont.
Don Bartlett, (treasurer) Scarborough, Ont.
Pastor Ronda Bosch, (secretary) Regina, Sask.
Rev. Allan Brouwer, Ingersoll, Ont.
Rev. Sandy Copland Dufour, (Chair) Hamilton, Ont.
Rev. Glynis Faith, Gravenhurst, Ont.
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Rev. Jinsil Park, Winnipeg, Man.
Rev. Meridyth Robertson, Trail, B.C.
Debbie Stimphil, (vice chair) Welland, Ont.

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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RF's mission

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