



The Presbyterian Church in Canada
L'Église presbytérienne au Canada

Assembly Council Highlights – March 2017

The Assembly Council supports the work of our agencies, helps the Church focus on equipping, strengthening and renewing congregations, calls the Church to account when in need of critique, and presents a vision for the mission of the church that looks to God for continual renewal. Taking on the financial and strategic responsibilities for the denomination, Assembly Council is the final authority in financial matters, within the mandate approved by General Assembly.

The Assembly Council met at Crieff Hills on March 26–28, 2017. The meeting began Sunday evening with worship led by the Rev. Bob Smith, Convenor of the Assembly Council and a presentation on leadership by the Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, Principal of The Presbyterian College in Montreal.

ASSEMBLY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE REPORT

Implementing the Strategic Plan of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

The Assembly Council affirmed that the Strategic Plan is a living document that will evolve as it is used by the denomination. Over the next three years the council intends to implement the plan by providing overall oversight for the Strategic Plan, measuring the council's efforts to renew, equip and inspire local congregations, building the council's capacity for visionary leadership, and celebrate good news stories related to the life and work of the church. A letter strongly encouraging the use of the Strategic Plan as a way to support congregation health and ministry will be sent to presbyteries and sessions.

Joint Meeting of Assembly Council and Life and Mission Agency Committee

A joint meeting of the Assembly Council and the Life and Mission Agency will be held at Crieff Hills in November, 2017. The purpose of this meeting is to build personal relationships amongst the members, discuss approaches to the Strategic Plan and clarify respective roles and responsibilities.

Overture No. 3, 2017 Re Formula for Synod Directors and Officer Insurance

The council agreed to recommend to the General Assembly that the present formula for calculating the premiums charged to synods and presbyteries for directors and officers insurance change from a flat rate to a shared portion based on the number of congregations in the presbytery and synod with a \$400 minimum premium. This could begin in 2018 and be subject to biennial review and possible amendment by the Assembly Council.

NATIVE MINISTRIES FUND

In response to a number of overtures from presbyteries, the Assembly Council established a Native Ministries Fund to help finance existing and future ministries led by or for Indigenous people. This is similar to other mission priority funds that have been established.

The recommendation that Assembly authorize \$200,000 seed money to the fund was referred to the council's Finance Committee. A recommendation that 10% of the assets realized from dissolved congregations, for a period of time, will also be placed before the General Assembly along with a request that individuals, congregations and presbyteries support the fund.

HUMAN SEXUALITY

Both the Life and Mission Agency and the Committee on Church Doctrine presented a synopsis of their individual reports to Assembly Council. While the two bodies worked independently, there has been helpful cooperation and many commonalities have emerged. There will, for example, be recommendations for further prayerful contemplation on various subjects related to human sexuality.

Both bodies believe that it is time to acknowledge the need for reconciliation and set out on a journey of repentance for the church's failure to address and curb homophobia and hypocrisy, and it is being recommended that a special committee be established to facilitate this.

FINANCE COMMITTEE AND THE 2018 BUDGET

Assembly Council recognized that the transition with our new Chief Financial Officer, Oliver Ng, has been exceptionally smooth. The council is grateful for the generous support contributed by Presbyterians in 2016 toward the ministries of the church. In 2016, Presbyterians across Canada gave over \$9.5 million to support the work of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Congregations and individuals gave over \$6.8 million to *Presbyterians Sharing* to support mission and ministry in Canada and around the world and over \$2.5 million to Presbyterian World Service & Development who also received over \$1 million in matching government grants.

A special campaign is being put in place with the goal of raising an additional \$450,000 from congregations and individuals in the coming year. The funds will be directed toward the varied and vital work of the church.

PENSION SOLVENCY

The Pension and Benefits Board and the council's finance committee continues to oversee the pension solvency situation. An amount of up to \$2 million has been requested to increase the solvency ratio to at least 85%, thus locking in contribution levels and alleviating the need for refile with the regulator for three years.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, LOCATIONS AND DESIGN TEAM

Terrie-Lee Hamilton presented comparable data of five university locations in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area as possible venues for future General Assemblies. While there were pros and cons for each one, Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario was deemed the best option and arrangements will be made to meet there in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The newly appointed Design Team consists of six members who possess a wealth of experience in the church, General Assemblies and Canada Youth events. The purpose of this team is to help shape General Assemblies that will be relevant, meaningful and efficient. The group met once by conference call and will meet again in April and will focus on the General Assembly in 2018 and onward.

During the 2016 General Assembly, an additional motion was adopted requesting Assembly Council to consider having some agencies, counsels and committees report to the General Assembly on a rotational basis, such as every two or three years rather than annually. The intent of this suggestion would be to reduce the volume of information and decisions to be considered each year, leaving more time for some of the larger or more complicated matters facing the church. The Assembly Council will recommend maintaining the status quo for now while encouraging report presenters to be concise and focus material on what commissioners need to know to make decisions. It was noted this is the sort of idea the Design Team will contemplate.

MINUTE OF APPRECIATION, TONY PLOMP

The Rev. Dr. Tony Plomp died on September 23, 2016 in Richmond, British Columbia. Dr. Plomp served as Deputy Clerk of the General Assembly since 1987, making him the longest serving clerk of Assembly in the history of our church. Assembly Council stood and paid its respects to Dr. Plomp as a Minute of Appreciation was read. That minute will be included in the council's report to the Assembly.

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP PRESENTATION

The Rev. Dr. Dale Woods gave a presentation on Visionary Leadership, one of the three pillars of The Presbyterian Church in Canada Strategic Plan, in two parts on Sunday and Monday evenings. On Sunday, he focused on some of the challenges that anxiety poses for leaders within the context of systems and congregations. On Monday, the focus shifted to a consideration of leadership opportunities. He said, in order for the church to grow, it requires leaders who can link four main requirements together: *clarity* in knowing what we want to achieve, *capacity* in time, finances and people, a *commitment* to see the journey through, and *competence* (including creativity). Dr. Woods also emphasized the need for leaders not to be so much focused on problem solving, but more so on creating cultures – cultures such as generosity or thankfulness.

PASSIVE ENERGY

Passive energy buildings rely on natural or passive energy for heating, cooling and ventilation. Some buildings can be retrofitted, but this may be costly. Justice Ministries wrote to several congregations that have taken steps to make their buildings more energy efficient. Each congregation stated that caring for creation was an important principle that influenced decisions about how they retrofitted their buildings.

A report was produced with examples from congregations and suggested resources to help congregations learn about the many considerations in designing a passive energy building. The report will be presented to General Assembly.

REPORT FROM THE MODERATOR

The Rev. Douglas H. Rollwage spoke of his visits to many congregations and presbyteries across Canada. He noted that when questions of human sexuality were raised he encouraged everyone to engage fully in the process and let their voices be heard. Earlier in his term, he visited Korea and has now met and spoken with both Han-Ca presbyteries.

The full minutes of this meeting are posted at presbyterian.ca/gao/assembly-council/

The next two Assembly Council meetings will be held November 19–22, 2017 (with the Life and Mission Agency) and March 18–20, 2018.