



A Prayer regarding Church Order

From Friday to Monday (April 6-9, 2018) I attended the Clerks' Consultation which takes place every two years, as clerks of presbyteries and synods gather to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern and to find support and encouragement in their role.

I am aware the presbyteries are often seen by congregations and even clergy as “the enemy”, getting in the way, imposing rules, asking irrelevant questions. Over the 72 hours of the consultation, as I listened to the conversation, I was struck by the deep concern the clerks had for the well-being of the church, the well-being of the congregations in their presbyteries, and the well-being of clergy. While we laugh at the line “done decently and in order” it reminds us that at its best, the goal of the church's processes is fairness and the ensuring that all voices have an opportunity to be heard.

A PRAYER

In the beginning, O God, you brought order out of chaos. Through the instructions you gave to Moses, you organized the people of Israel into groups and gave them leaders. By the leadership of the apostles, you called the church into being giving it shape and structure and decision-making processes.

We thank you, God of order, for presbyteries and synods and general assemblies, the means by which you seek to guide this, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, one expression of your church in the world. We rejoice at the guidance that comes from presbyteries, the support they provide in the midst of crisis, and the creative initiatives they enable and support.

We thank you, God of wisdom, for clerks and moderators, committee convenors and presbytery members, all of whom you have called into leadership in the church. Strengthen and encourage all those who serve the church through the work of presbyteries and synods. Give to the members of presbytery, spiritual wisdom and pastoral insight as they provide leadership in these challenging times and in contentious situations.

We confess, O God, that we have not always been attentive to your guidance.

We have failed as presbyteries and presbyters to listen to others well, we have failed to do our best, we have failed to trust the prophetic voices that have called us to take risks for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ.

We have failed as congregations to believe that presbyteries seek to act in good faith, we have failed to listen to advice that might challenge our pre-conceived ideas, in our pride and in our distrust we have failed to walk humbly as congregational leaders.

By the Holy Spirit come to us anew, transform us that with glad and joyful hearts we may serve within the church order by which The Presbyterian Church in Canada is shaped, that the church of your Son, Jesus Christ, may bring glory to your holy name.

These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

—*The Rev. Peter Bush, moderator of the 2017 General Assembly*