

THIRD SEDERUNT

ASSEMBLY CONSTITUTED

At Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, on Monday, June fourth, two thousand and eighteen at two o'clock in the afternoon, the Assembly met pursuant to adjournment. The Moderator constituted the Assembly with prayer.

COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS (cont'd from p. XXX)

The Assembly called for the report of the Committee on Business which was presented by M.R. McLennan, convener. The Assembly agreed that the sederunt would include a report of the Committee on the Roll and Leave to Withdraw followed immediately by and address by the ecumenical guest, the Rev. Dr. Willard Metzger. The Assembly agreed.

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COMMITTEE ON THE ROLL AND LEAVE TO WITHDRAW

The Assembly called for the report of the Committee on the Roll and Leave to Withdraw which was presented by J.R. Wilson, convener.

T.G. Hagen moved, duly seconded, that the following commissioner be granted leave to withdraw: S. McInnis (Presbytery of Paris) from the seventh sederunt. Adopted.

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ECUMENICAL GUEST

The Moderator invited A. Currie to welcome and introduce the Rev. Dr. Willard Metzger, Executive Director, Mennonite Church Canada, to the Assembly. Before this role, he served in pastoral ministry for 18 years and was with World Vision Canada as Director of Church Relations for 5 years. He has travelled extensively to over 72 countries and has had teaching assignments with Youth With A Mission, Emmanuel Bible College in Kitchener and Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

Dr. Metzger explained a Mennonite understanding that Jesus is the centre of their faith, community is the centre of their lives and reconciliation is the centre of their work, as they seek to promote the gospel of peace and Christian discipleship. Dr. Metzger described the process the Mennonite church followed when seeking to discern God's will concerning human sexuality issues. He said it was primarily a community discernment rather than leadership driven process. Much anxiety from the community, and from families, surfaced. In the end it was concluded that the Mennonite church is not being called to change its confession of faith but rather, it was acknowledged that people are moving towards a different understanding from what has been traditionally held. He noted the same yearning among Presbyterians that he heard in the Mennonite church, that is for the church to stay together through this discernment. He concluded, "Thank you for this opportunity. I count it a true privilege and honour to be with you."

SEXUALITY OVERTURES

Prior to a period of discussion on sexuality overtures, the Moderator outlined a model of respectful discussion and disagreement that included principles of openness to listen to others, no "us" verses "them", respect for all people's faith commitment and journey, and respect for biblical authority. He reminded the Assembly that all of us want to do what is right in God's eyes. He hoped commissioners would embrace these values. It was emphasized that today's session would be a time for discussion and clarification leading to a decision-making time the following day.

Committee on Church Doctrine

Life and Mission Agency (cont'd from p. XXX)

Assembly Council

Special Committee re Listening (LGBTQI People)

The Assembly called for the report of the Committee on Church Doctrine which, as printed on p. XXX-XXX, was presented by P.D. Johnston and M.H. Smith, members of the committee; the report of the Assembly Council which, as printed on p. XXX-XXX, was presented by R.H. Smith, convener; the report of the Special Committee re Listening (LGBTQI People) which, as printed on p. XXX-XXX, was presented by R.N. Faris and S. Senior, co-conveners.

Receive and Consider

C.E. Weeks moved, duly seconded, that the reports of the Committee on Church Doctrine, the Assembly Council, the combined report on Sexuality Overtures and the Special Committee re Listening (LGBTQI People) be received and considered. Adopted.

T. Billard and I.A. Ross-McDonald, Life and Mission Agency, committee convener and General Secretary respectively, were also invited to speak to the agency's report, which was opened during the second sederunt.

The presenters outlined the portions of their reports that related to sexuality overtures so that commissioners would be aware of the full spectrum of forthcoming recommendations and the rationale for them before they are placed before the Assembly for voting at a later sederunt. The reports were heard in the following order: Committee on Church Doctrine with M.H. Smith commenting on the "Views of the Minority", Life and Mission Agency (Justice Ministry), Assembly Council and Special Committee re Listening (LGBTQI People). Questions for clarification were entertained.

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2018 E.H. JOHNSON AWARD RECIPIENT

The Moderator invited Ms. Annemarie Klassen, convener of the E.H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee, to welcome and introduce the 2018 E.H. Johnson Award recipient, Dr. George Sabra. Dr. Sabra is the Professor of Systematic Theology and President, Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon. In the Middle East, Dr. Sabra stands as a theologian, teacher, preacher and church leader. The Near East School of Theology engages in reflection, research and discussion concerning issues of peace, justice, human rights, inter-religious dialogue and the environment.

Dr. Sabra said, "I express my sincerest thanks to the E. H. Johnson Memorial Fund Committee for having distinguished our small and humble institution of theological education with this prestigious award." He noted 2019 will mark the 150th anniversary of the seminary and that it "...has always played an ecumenical and inter-religious role much bigger than its size and number, both in the Near East in general and in Lebanon in particular." Dr. Sabra spoke about religious extremism. He said, "Religious extremism is a very serious issue. It threatens the very existence of the church in the Middle East." He defined religious extremism as "...a movement whose adherents are absolutely convinced of the truth they hold and the right to force it on others violently." Dr. Sabra shared various theories about the cause of religious extremism and what steps might be taken to dismantle it. He said, "The most effective dismantling is one done from inside. Thus, where there is Christian religious extremism, it is the responsibility and task of Christians to address and dismantle it. Similarly, where there is Islamic extremism, it is primarily the task of Muslims and Islamic institutions to dismantle it from within." In conclusion, Dr. Sabra said, "In the name of the Near East School of Theology, which is humbly doing its part in the turbulent Middle East, I thank you for the honour of receiving this prestigious award."

The Rev. Dr. Nick Athanasiadis thanked Dr. Sabra on behalf of the Assembly.

WORSHIP

The commissioners were led in worship as the sederunt drew to a close.

ADJOURNMENT

Announcements having been made, the Moderator adjourned the Assembly with prayer, to meet at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, on Monday, June fourth, two thousand and eighteen at seven o'clock in the evening, of which public intimation was given.